

Today a Savior has been Born to You  
Luke 2:8-20  
Key Verse: 2:11

by Kevin Albright

"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

Merry Christmas! Last Sunday we studied the Christmas story part 1: The Baby in the Manger. The baby in the manger humanly looks like a weak and sad scene. But the baby in the manger grew into a man who could save us. He could understand our sorrows and sufferings. He chose to be poor, in order to make us rich. He is God's love revealed to the world. Let's hear the angel's message to shepherds and receive this good news of great joy and peace personally. Let's also pray to share it with many unhappy and restless people all around us.

Part 1. The Angels' Message to Shepherds (8-14)

Baby Jesus was placed in a manger because there was no room for him in the local inn. The people were all too pressed with their own problems and concerns to welcome Jesus. Let's not make the same mistake and get so busy-minded and self-centered that we leave Jesus out in the barn or in some corner of our lives.

Look at VERSE 8, "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night." While others slept, and baby Jesus let out his first cries, the shepherds were struggling to stay awake. Probably they worked in shifts to protect their sheep from wild animals and thieves or from straying away. Jacob, Moses and David had all been shepherds. A shepherd's job was common but not so noble or well paid; it was rather a difficult and dangerous job, like a nightwatch security guard.

Why did God choose to bring his message to shepherds? Perhaps it was because they were the only ones nearby who were awake at the time. Or perhaps it was because they were humble and simple enough to receive this message sincerely and respond to it. It is noteworthy that God is called our Shepherd in the Bible. David wrote, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall lack no good thing." The baby Jesus would one day grow to be our Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for us, his sheep.

What happened as these shepherds kept watch that night? VERSE 9 says, "An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." This was one of those rare moments, when it pleased God to make a special announcement through an angel. This angel was accompanied by the glory of the Lord. Heaven is filled with God's glory. Now heaven was coming to earth in the baby Jesus.

How did the shepherds respond to this sight? The Bible says they were terrified. This is the standard response when a human sees an angel of the Lord. I'm sure you and I would have been terrified as well. The angel's words were typical of first words to startled people: "Do not be afraid."

The angel had more to say. Look at VERSE 10b. "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." It is much more common for us to hear bad news. If you want to hear some bad news, just tune in to any news station. These days we hear daily bad news about the serious economic recession our nation is in. News reports overflow with bad news: scandals, war, murder, crime, tragedies, catastrophes. But the angel did not bring any bad news. The angel declared good news of great joy for all the people. Yesterday we celebrated two blessed weddings: Caleb and Coral Cook, and Jeremy and Susanna Hajek. For them, it was good news of great joy, and a joyous occasion for many others. But perhaps for a few unmarried people who hope to marry, it might have been a little sad if they focused on themselves. Usually, a baby's birth is another joyful occasion. But it could cause a childless couple to struggle with envy. The President's bailout plan for the auto industry is good news for auto workers and companies. But there are always plenty of critics as well. It is hard to find universal good news of great joy for everyone. Yet the birth of Jesus was declared as good news of great joy for all people.

God intended this good news for all people. But not all people accept it. People can reject this good news in their pride and rebellion. For those who reject Jesus, like King Herod or the Pharisees, Jesus represents a threat. Jesus represents a threat to anyone whose hope is in worldly power, position or wealth.

Jesus' birth is good news personally only for those who understand who Jesus is and why he came. The angel explains in VERSE 11. "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." First the angel said, "Today." That means right here and now. Today is different from tomorrow. Tomorrow is a common excuse for laziness, procrastination, unfinished tasks and broken promises. Today means, "What are you waiting for? Why are you still making excuses or complaining?" 2 Corinthians 6:2b says, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."

The angel said, "Today, in the town of David..." The town of David was Bethlehem. David was God's greatest king. He was a shepherd king, a man after God's own heart. God promised David an eternal dynasty through one of his descendants, the Christ. God kept his promises to David.

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you..." This is the main point of the angel's message. A Savior has been born to us. This is good news of great joy for all people simply because we all need a Savior. The movies often have us hoping for a Savior, a hero, a champion to deliver us out of our helplessness and hopelessness. Why are we so desperate to find a Savior? The answer is obvious. We all need a Savior. Even macho men and martial art experts cannot save themselves from their sins and failures and all the elements of death and defeat. The bad news of our human condition is that we have all without exception failed. We have all fallen short, not only of our own standards, but of God's righteous, holy and perfect standards. Who can stand before the holy God on judgment day and pass when all our righteous acts are like filthy rags to God? No one can stand. We have all said, done and thought repulsive and despicable things before God and man. We deserve God's judgment: to be condemned and thrown out onto an eternal garbage heap and burned up. But don't despair. A Savior has been born to you. He is Jesus. Jesus means, "The Lord saves." Jesus can save us, not only from the consequences of our sins, but also from the power of sin and its accompanying elements like fatalism, bitterness and sorrow.

One young man had a shameful and debilitating pornography addiction. He didn't have the desire or power to get out of it. Through faith in Jesus and the word of God, he has been changed and is growing with the vision to be a foreign missionary. One woman was wounded by her parents' divorce. She feared if she could marry and have a happy family. But she accepted Jesus as her Savior and Lord and entrusted her marriage to him. She married a growing disciple of Jesus and they recently celebrated their 20th anniversary of happy marriage. Yesterday I read the life testimony of a growing disciple of Jesus. He had been a slave of pleasure-seeking, especially women and alcohol. But Jesus Christ has saved him and changed him into a man of faith and prayer and gospel mission. In his joy of salvation he gladly gave me a copy of his life testimony. There are countless testimonies of those who have been saved and changed by Jesus all over the world, across nations and cultures. Jesus is the Savior of the world. A Savior has been born to us--to me and to you. To all who receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God.

The angel said this Savior is Christ the Lord. The word "Christ" in Greek and "Messiah" in Hebrew both mean, "the Anointed One." Jesus is the Christ--the anointed one of God who rules God's kingdom. Jesus is not only our Savior from sin; he is also Christ our Lord, the one we must obey and take our orders from. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. The Bible says that every knee will bow before him and every tongue will confess that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' to the glory of God the Father. It is not right to enjoy Jesus' salvation for us and then live as we please. We must also submit to his authority, teaching and direction. So many modern Christians live cultural Christian lives, thinking that if they go to church or attend a Bible study they are doing fine, when in reality they have little intention of doing what Jesus wants and says. This grieves the Holy Spirit when a Christian acts and thinks like this. Let's repent of this tendency in ourselves. Let's ask God to examine our hearts and remove any unclean and rebellious inclinations in us, sanctify us and make us like Jesus, holy and humble, sacrificial and loving. With Jesus as our Lord, we are no longer under sin and Satan's tyranny. We are free to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in holiness and righteousness every day.

The angel also told the shepherds: "This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." A sign is an unusual indication. A baby in a manger was not ordinary. Moses was discovered as a baby in a basket. He saved Israel from their slavery. The baby in the manger is even greater; he is the Savior and Lord for all who believe in and follow him. The angel told the shepherds where to find this newborn Savior and Christ, for they

could not have figured it out on their own. God must reveal Christ to each person through his word for us to find him.

God had a little more to say to the shepherds. Look at VERSES 13-14. Suddenly the glorious angel was accompanied by a great army of angels. They were praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." What does glory to God mean? To give glory to God is to give honor, praise and credit to God. God made all people to bring glory, honor and praise to God. All have failed in this, beginning with Adam, because of our sin. Though Adam and we failed, Jesus did not. Jesus brought glory to God in the highest. How did Jesus give honor, praise and credit to God? Jesus' birth of the virgin Mary, his miracles and his resurrection reveal the power of God. Jesus' coming to save us as God promised reveals the faithfulness of God. Jesus' sinless life reveals the holiness of God. Jesus' teaching reveals the wisdom of God. Jesus' perfect obedience to God reveals the righteousness and goodness of God. Jesus' death to save us reveals the love of God. In a word, Jesus' whole life reveals God to us--who God is and what God has done. Only in and through Christ do our lives bring pleasing glory to God.

Jesus' birth is also peace to men on whom his favor rests. The world is full of unrest. On a global scale, nation rises against nation. On a personal level, many families end in divorce. Even individually, people show they are restless. Why do so many people throughout the world take drugs though they are illegal, unaffordable and their lives are ruined by them? They are searching for peace, for joy and for meaning in life. They wonder, "Why am I here? For what should I live?" When they don't know, they do regrettable, foolish, harmful things to themselves and others.

Jesus gives peace to his people. He said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." For the believer in Christ, Romans 5:1 assures us, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." Jesus gives us peace with God through the forgiveness of our sins. This peace is the secret to peace with others. Jesus' birth is glory to God in heaven and peace to people on earth.

## Part 2. The Shepherds' Response (15-20)

According to VERSE 15, the angels left and went into heaven. The shepherds could've just sat there, talking about how awesome it all was. It's good that they didn't do that, because then Mary wouldn't have heard it and told it so it could be written down in the Bible. Rather than just sitting there, they left their sheep saying, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." Like the shepherds, God's word is given to us so we can act upon it, not just think about it.

Now look at what happened in VERSES 16-19. "So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." The shepherds not only went and saw the baby. They also shared what the angels told them about the good news of great joy, the Savior, Christ the Lord, glory to God and peace to men. They shared this good news with great joy. So through them, the gospel spread and more people came to know about this baby Jesus and who he really is. For those of us who have received this good news, let's not keep it to ourselves, but share it sincerely and joyfully with others.

Finally look at VERSE 20. "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told." For those who keep believing and sharing the good news of Christ, God keeps giving joy and peace and praises to God.

As a college freshman, I experienced this peace and joy in the baby Jesus. After a few months in college, I was so confused about the meaning of my life due to my father's death, a Mormon girlfriend and joining a college fraternity. At this time of confusion and frustration, I attended a UBF Christmas worship service at Loyola University. Through the drama, great joy and peace came to me as I heard the shepherds in the drama repeatedly announce, "Good news of great joy for all the people." I also remembered the real meaning of Christmas through specials like "A Charlie Brown Christmas," and "The Little Drummer Boy." I thought, "That's it! Why am I so confused? Life has been answered through Jesus Christ. He is the good news of great joy for all people." A Savior has been born to us, to you and to me. He is Christ the Lord. Great joy, peace and salvation comes to all who receive

him as Savior and Lord. May his favor be with you. May you share this good news of great joy with others. May the joy and peace of Christ spread all over the world through those who believe and share this good news.