

Good News of Great Joy

Luke 2:8-20

Key Verses: 10-11

“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.’”

Thank God who brought us here today to hear good news. The good news is, **“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”** This year seemed to have too much bad news. There were mass shootings, images of broken people fleeing in caravans, hurricanes, wildfires, threats of war from various places, the sinking stock market, etc, etc. I tried to follow events on social media, but it was filled with hatred in the comments. Where could we go to escape this bad news? It made me really sorrowful and sometimes angry. But then I read Luke 2:10, where an angel said, **“I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”** Wow! The angel promised good news plus great joy. Causing ordinary joy would be good enough, but this news will cause **“great”** joy. And it is for all the people - literally everyone everywhere whoever lived. Recently my daughter traveled to many places for work, such as Ghana in Africa, the Ukraine, and Harlem and the Bronx of New York City. She exposed me to the diverse needs of so many peoples. Yet, the angel promised the birth of the Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, is good news that will cause great joy for them all. We want to end 2018 and begin 2019 with this good news. May God open our hearts to receive this good news and fill us with great joy, both now and forever.

We begin continuing the story of Jesus' birth. To recap, Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph were forced to go from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea by the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus for a census. While there, the time came for Mary to give birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, an animal's feed box, because there was no other place for them. According to verse 8, there happened to be shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

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Look at verse 9. **“An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.”** These sleepy shepherds were suddenly overwhelmed by the sight of a glorious angel and the glory of the Lord shining around them. Can you imagine it? The sleepy shepherds were suddenly surrounded by the most brilliant light, more brilliant than the best light show the world has ever seen. It was God celebrating the birth of his son. We know that fathers are happy at the birth of their children. Even God could not control the joy he had at the birth of his son. He had to tell someone. So he sent the angel to shepherds, even for a short time.

Of course, the shepherds were terrified. Who wouldn't be when seeing something like this? But the angel said to them, **“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”** The angel comforted them. God wanted to give them and us good news. That is the meaning of Christmas--it is the message of good news from God who loves us. Often good news for one person is not good news for another. Particularly, in sports and politics, there is a winner and a loser--the winner rejoices, while the loser cries. But this good news is for all the people. As we said, this good news is the birth of the Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Let's think about why.

First, Jesus is the Savior. The angel said, **“Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you....”** When a king has a son, usually it is announced, “The future king is born.” Yet the angel emphasized that a Savior has been born to us. It is because all people are in need of a savior. During finals season, I'm sure many students cried out, “Lord, save me!” The Israelites believed they needed to be saved from Rome. God promised to send a savior from the line of King David. That is why the angel said, **“Today in the town of David....”**

However, the Savior God was sending would save all mankind from something far greater than a political kingdom. God was first going to rescue people's hearts and minds. So many people we know have broken hearts and minds. Even if they look good on the outside, maybe even laughing all the time, they may be crying in their hearts. Robin Williams was a one of the greatest comedians of my lifetime. He made so many laugh. But he was broken-hearted

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and committed suicide four years ago. The root cause of broken hearts according to the Bible is separation from God, which is sin. Sin is a deadly disease that has infected all mankind. There is no cure for sin in medicine - no antibiotic. What is worse is that sin causes great wounds. In the Bible Satan is depicted as a fierce dragon with seven heads and ten horns. He is too smart and powerful for any human to defeat, who have only one head and zero horns. Satan outwits people and causes them to sin. When they do, they are impaled by his horns with an incurable wound. Many try to cover up their wounds in some way, such as with drugs or many kinds of pleasures. But the wounds remain. What is worse, wounded people wound others, even though we don't want to.

But in verse 11 the angel said a Savior has been born to us. He is Jesus who saves us from our sins. Jesus saves us by his power over the devil. Luke 1:69 says that Jesus is the horn of salvation. Like a ram going to battle, the horn of salvation crushes the horns of Satan. Jesus breaks the power of sin and Satan. At the same time Jesus' horn has power to heal all our wounds. 1 Peter 2:24 says, **“He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’”** No matter the wound, Jesus can heal us. Anyone who is wounded, Jesus wants to come and heal you this Christmas. This year I felt the pain of wounds in my heart. I had a vision for years to build up an orchestra. But over time, I became lazy, and was stuck in bad habits, and lost hope. But others worked hard and did a great job leading a fantastic orchestra, especially for our summer conference. I was struck in my heart because I had messed up so badly and had hurt people, whether I intended to or not. It felt like a knife was in my heart and I didn't know what to do. But God allowed me to study about Jesus the Savior who heals our wounds. I believe Jesus will heal all the wounds and grow love among us all. Maybe some here have wounds, even if they don't want to show it. Its okay. Go to Jesus privately and receive his healing.

Jesus is the Savior who also saves us from the power of death. In the early 20th century some clever men created the Humanist Manifesto. It rejected religion and promoted making a utopia, a paradise, by human goodness, intellect and technology. Yet, even if this were possible, one problem remains - the problem of

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death. The power of death has overpowered the world since sin entered the world. All despair and sorrow are ultimately caused by the power of death. There is no remedy for death. Maybe young people don't think about the power of death. But it is real. Did you know in your 30's all people begin to lose muscle mass? My dad was once a vibrant young Marine. But recently he had trouble walking due to blood clots. These are symptoms of the power of death. But the angel announced we have a Savior who saves us from the power of death. After his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead, shattering the power of death. Those in Jesus have eternal life and even laugh at the power of death. They say, "Haha! **Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?...But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" (1 Co 15:55&57) Jesus saves us from death giving us eternal life.

Ultimately, Jesus saves us to restore us to his eternal kingdom. God's original plan was for all mankind to live in and manage his kingdom forever, which is paradise. No matter our race, gender, age, culture, or whatever, we were all created to live in God's paradise forever. Paradise is perfection - perfect peace, perfect joy, perfect love, perfect food and even perfect temperature. And it was a perfect love relationship with God. However, I don't think anyone lives in paradise. If you do, I want to move in with you today. And none of us is good enough to manage paradise - even making a happy home is difficult for most of us. Instead of paradise, the world we see is riddled with disease, violence, injustice, hunger, corruption and death. And so much garbage - I am really bothered by the huge garbage patch in the Pacific Ocean. We all groan because we need to live in paradise, but do not. We try to take vacations to beautiful places, at least to enjoy for a few days. But we return to the "real" world all too soon. Not only so, but our character became corrupt, and mankind became terrible - murderers and liars and excuse makers and immoral people. All this is the fruit of sin.

But the angel said, "**Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you....**" This is the most important and beautiful message. Jesus saves us from our sins and restores us to paradise forever in his kingdom. It is the best news anyone can ever give you. There is a great story that reveals how Jesus forgives sins and restores a person to paradise. It was at Jesus' cross. Jesus was unjustly

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tried, condemned and sentenced to death by crucifixion. As he hung there, so many people mocked him. Next to him were two criminals, being executed for their crimes. One of them mocked Jesus too. But Jesus was hanging there, shedding his holy blood for our sins. He prayed on the cross, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”** Jesus revealed he was dying for the forgiveness of sins of everyone, even those crucifying him. Jesus offered his life for our lives, so we can be forgiven. The other criminal couldn't believe what he heard. Jesus was hanging on a cross but he saw God in Jesus and believed Jesus would soon enter his kingdom. In the last moments of his life, he shamelessly asked, **“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”** **Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** Wow! Jesus promised to take that man to paradise that day. Jesus is the Savior who takes a criminal and each of us to paradise through the forgiveness of sins. It is Christmas. So I must give each of you a present. I wish I could offer each of you a two week vacation in a caribbean paradise. But I can't. However, I can offer you eternal paradise in the kingdom of God through the forgiveness of sins in our Lord Jesus Christ. It the best gift anyone can give you. I thought I would have the best life in the world by playing music and living on a hill overlooking a forest. But when I denied God, and lived a life of sin, my life was a mess. I was immoral, completely selfish and almost became a drunk. At 25 I thought my life was ruined, and once thought about taking my life. As a last hope, I went to a church and heard of Jesus' love and forgiveness. I came to UBF and was asked to memorize 1 Co 15. That passage convinced me there is a kingdom of God and I will look like Jesus in heaven. I had real hope. I don't know how, but my life completely turned around. Music became a success. I started a new career as an engineer, married the most beautiful and wonderful woman of God, and had two beautiful children. I also began to care for others for the first time. I began to love my brothers and sisters, and my parents. And I offered my music degree to serve our church for nearly 30 years. Who could save me and give me hope like this? Only Jesus our Savior.

Second, Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord. Look at verse 11 again. **“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord”** The angel specifically called Jesus **“the Lord.”** **“The Lord”** means that Jesus is

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God and King. Why is Jesus **“the Lord”** good news? We need a government. But no government is perfect. Those who hope in a perfect government of any kind will be greatly disappointed. The world has been riddled with many evil kings and rulers who abuse their people for their own benefit. Too many people have lost their lives for their ruler’s ego or greed. But Jesus is King of the perfect kingdom of God. He reigns with truth and justice and love. Matthew 2:6 describes Jesus’ kingship. **“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”** Jesus cares for his people and protects them like a good shepherd. David said of the Lord in Psalm 23:1, **“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”**

However, the fact that we have a Lord can be troubling. Many think they are their own lord. But Jesus is the Lord. We need Him to rule our hearts and lives and protect us. When we submit to his lordship, he rules us like a good shepherd. One woman is a brilliant scientist who developed cancer medicines. She should be happy. But once she famously wrote, “Though I developed medicines to save lives, I myself felt like I was dying.” By God’s grace she received Jesus love and decided to submit to him in her late 30’s. The Lord became her good shepherd. He blessed her to marry and have a beautiful baby boy at the age of 42. Now she feels alive and still works on cancer medicines. May God bless all of us to accept Jesus as Lord.

Look at verse 12, **“This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”** The baby in the manger is the sign that God’s good news is true. When we see a nativity scene, please remember that that angel’s message is true. Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host - maybe thousands of angels - appeared, praising God in a heavenly chorus, like our chorus, only a little bigger. They sang, **“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”** They praised God who had revealed his glory by sending the Savior, the Lord as a baby in a manger. And they offered peace to all who believe in him. What a beautiful phrase. Let’s say it together: **“Glory to God...peace on earth.”**

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Then, just as suddenly as they appeared, the angels disappeared, returning to heaven. The shepherds said, **“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”** They went and found Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus, who was lying in the manger. What happened when they saw the baby Jesus? Verse 20 says, **“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”** The weary shepherds were filled with great joy, glorifying and praising God. Many of us are weary after a difficult year. But today we heard that Jesus, the Savior and Lord has been born for us. This is the best news for all of us. May God help us to accept this and cause great joy to overflow in our hearts. May this good news overflow in our souls from now until the end of our days, and to all people of the world. Merry Christmas!