

Gainsville Baptist Church
December 19, 2010
Christmas Sunday
Luke 2:8-14

Good Tidings of Great Joy

Introduction: In this passage of Scripture, we have a few shepherds out in the field away from everyone and everything doing what they do every night... watching over their flocks.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, an angel appears before them and scares the daylights out of them.

The angel calms them and then delivers a message from Heaven.

“Behold, I bring you good tidings, of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

This messenger from Heaven has been sent to proclaim the greatest news in history.

A thousand years before Jesus was born, Israel was the greatest kingdom in the Mediterranean world. David was reigning, as king and his son Solomon would follow his reign. They were experiencing peace from all their enemies and ambassadors were coming to them from all over..... seeking the Wisdom of Solomon, King of Israel.

But that is not the way it was around the time of the birth of Christ. Israel had suffered the division of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. The Assyrians had taken over the Northern Kingdom and citizens of the Southern Kingdom had been exiled from their homeland. As a matter of fact.....there was no kingdom of Israel left at all.

At this time in history....Israel was nothing more than a small state under the rule of an immoral, ungodly, pagan Roman Empire.

At the time of the birth of our Lord Jesus.....there seemed to be very little good taking place in the lives of God’s people.

And yet, the Sovereign hand of God was at work.....and these shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks by night.....were the recipients of **good tidings of great joy being proclaimed by angels.**

The Greek term for good tidings is *euangelizo*.....from it, we get our English word evangelism. Evangelism means to share or preach the good news of Jesus Christ.

So what is the good news announced by the angels?

Transition: The angel used three titles to describe this baby born in a stable in Bethlehem. Each title has significance.

Luke 8:11 - *For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

Jesus is Savior
Jesus is Christ
Jesus is Lord

I. Jesus is Savior

Explanation: The angel did not call the baby's earthly name but we know it to be Jesus which means.....The Lord is salvation.

Matthew 1:21 - *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."*

The reason Jesus was born was to save people from their sins.....plain and simple.

Unfortunately, Jesus is often presented as someone who will make your marriage better, get you a job, rescue you from a bad habit or give your life meaning.

All of these issues of life are difficult but they are simply symptoms of the greatest problem.

Man's greatest problem is SIN.

Romans 3:10 - *There is none righteous, no not one.*

Romans 3:23 - *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

Every person ever born is guilty of breaking God's holy law and deserves eternal punishment in HELL.

The true gospel message is that Jesus Christ came into the world to rescue people from sin and guilt—not simply a feeling of guilt.....but true God-imposed guilt that damns people to hell.

Transition: The second title used to describe Jesus was Christ.

II. Jesus is Christ

Explanation: Christ is quite a title for a baby that was born in a feeding trough.

The term Christ means **Messiah** or **Anointed One Worthy of Exaltation.**

Revelation 19:16 - *And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Jesus.....this baby born in a manger..... has been anointed by God as King of Kings and Lord of Lords who will reign forever.

Hebrews 3:1 - *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.*

Jesus has been anointed as our High Priest for His people.

I Timothy 2:5 - *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*

Jesus has been anointed by God as your Mediator to stand between sinful you and Holy God.

Transition: Jesus was described by the Angel as **Savior**, as **Christ**.....and as **Lord**.

III. Jesus is Lord

Explanation: In the Old Testament, the term lord was often used as a term of respect for a husband or any man in a place of authority.....even a slave owner was referred to as lord.

To call someone lord indicated respect and acknowledgement of your subservience to that person.

But in this context.....Lord is no mere exaggerated human title. To say that this child born in a stable was Lord.....meant He is GOD.

For someone to say.....Jesus is Lord is a confession of faith. Last Sunday night when Michelle Miller and Shelby Benefield were baptized they both gave testimony of faith in Jesus and loudly proclaimed.....**Jesus is my Lord and Savior.**

No one who does not affirm Christ's full deity and equality with God the Father can be saved.

John 14:8-10 - *Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father*

Conclusion: The Good Tidings of Great Joy that was delivered by the angels is that through this Savior, Jesus, you can be saved from an eternity in Hell and you can be moved from being an enemy of good to being a son of God.

John 1:12 - *As many as would receive him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God.*

I want to refer you back where we began.

Luke 8:11 – 14 - *Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:*

*“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*

Shepherds were not held in the highest esteem in their culture. Shepherds were not allowed to give testimony in courts of law in Israel because they were thought to be notorious liars.

Shepherds weren't very involved in the religious services of their day. Because of their livelihood, shepherds came into contact with unclean animals, with dead animals, and shepherding required tending the flock 7 days a week ,,,,which further defiled them in the eyes of the self-righteous Jewish people.

So you can imagine how good church-going folk in Israel might have thought about people who weren't so faithful in going to church.

They were looked down upon, they were not held in high esteem. And yet, the birth announcement for the King of Kings was entrusted to these lowly shepherds instead of the temple priests or the Saducees, Pharisees or any other individuals highly esteemed by men.

This is significant.....In three different gospels.....Jesus is quoted as saying:

“I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” In other words Jesus is saying, ‘I didn't come for people who think that they're already righteous. I came for people who are sinners.’

Jesus was not suggesting that there is a class of people who aren't sinners. He's just suggesting that there's a class of people **who think that they're not sinners.**

There is a class of people who think that they don't need the grace of God, and sadly, in Israel's time and in our own time some of those people are people who are very religious.

And Jesus is saying, 'I've come for sinners, like those shepherds that so many of you despise and look down on. Those are the kinds of people that I announce the good news to.'

I want you to pause for a second and give some consideration to the term entitlement.....because it's VERY important.

Entitlement.....is a sense that you are owed something and a sense of entitlement will strangle gratitude.

If we think we are owed the grace of God, if we think we deserve the mercy of God, then we will never ever be grateful for it and we'll never be ready to receive it.

Only the person who knows that he or she needs grace.....is in a position to appreciate grace offered.

It's only when a person knows that he needs the mercy of God that the mercy of God is sweet.

And that is important for us to realize. If our understanding of ourselves is that we're pretty good people and that '*God will cut us some slack*'...then we will never ever adequately understand grace, and we may not understand the gospel at all.

We are "sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure."

We don't deserve the mercy of God and we don't deserve the grace of God.

And so when He DOES show us His mercy and grace, it is the greatest news you will ever hear.

Until you realize that you're a sinner, you're not ready to respond to the glorious grace of God.

Does the reality that you're a sinner and that you stand in need of grace impact your life?

Final Conclusion: The life of Jesus is bookended between the humble manger scene where He was born and the wooden cross where He died between two thieves.

My friends, on this Christmas of 2010.....I beg you to surrender your life to Jesus Christ. Confess your sin.....Repent of your sin.....place your faith in Jesus to save you.

If you are already a believer.....ask God to give you a humble perspective of yourself and live accordingly.