

December 21, 2025
The King is Coming: The Angel's Song
Luke 2:8-20
Vernon Advent Christian Church

Introduction...

There is a pretty good chance that you have seen the Charlie Brown Christmas Special. And if you have, then you know that the highlight of the special is when Linus recites the words of the Christmas Story found in Luke 2. This is the passage that records the angel from heaven announcing the birth of the Savior to the shepherds. During this scene, Linus famously drops his blanket while reciting the angel's words to "Fear Not."

This iconic moment symbolizes letting go of temporary comforts for the true security of faith in Christ that ties in later when Linus takes the blanket and lovingly wraps Charlie Brown's little tree, which then becomes beautiful. Now, we're going to read through this same passage again, which was acted out by the children this morning, and we're going to focus in on the song of the angels.

If you have been with us the last few weeks you know that when the good news was announced that the long-awaited King was coming, then the characters of the story can't help but burst out into song, which in our imaginations, seems to play out like a real-life flash mob or musical. We saw this first in Luke 1:68-79 in Zechariah's song and then last week in Mary's song found in Luke 2:46-55.

In our passage this morning, we see that the same message was delivered by an angel to a ragtag group of shepherds out in the fields. And maybe, just maybe, God's choice of the shepherds was sending an important message to us. The birth of our Savior was not just for the privileged or the elite, He came into the world to save everyone for everyone needs salvation. If you are able please stand in honor of God's as I read Luke 2:8-20. [Read Passage]

Let's set the scene. First we have the angel's announcement. It was night and I imagine the shepherds sitting around a campfire while the sheep were safe and secure. And sometime during the night we are told "the glory of the Lord surrounded them and they were filled with great fear." When the Bible uses phrases like this it refers to a brilliant light or fire that surrounds, or represents, the presence of God. I imagine the intensity of a high powered spotlight or searchlight. Maybe it was similar to when someone shines their bright headlights right into your eyes while going down the road at night.

I would love to know what the men saw when their eyes began to adjust. I suspect they did not see a "chubby" baby with wings and a harp like many of the pictures we have seen of angels. No, it was much more awesome than that for, we're told, it struck "great fear" in the shepherds. We don't know what the angel looked like but we do know what the angel said. [Read vs. 10-12]

The angel told them to "Fear not" for he had come to announce "good news" that would bring "great joy". So this was not an announcement of judgment or a warning like the messages given through the prophets of the OT to motivate the people to repentance. Something wonderful was happening, the fulfillment of all the OT prophecies had now

come and this was going to change their lives both now and forever. This news was so great it would cause them to celebrate and give thanks.

It is hard for us to understand the incredible nature of this announcement. Israel had been waiting for God's promised Messiah who would come and rescue them and the time of agony and waiting was about to end. The 400 years of silence when there was no word from God through His prophets between the Old and New Testaments was over. God had come near and was born in Bethlehem. But this was not just good news to the Jews. The angel announced that this is good news for ALL people. That includes you and me.

And the angel even tells them how to verify what is being said. The baby would not be hard to find. They wouldn't find him in the palace or a temple. He would be found in a stable lying in a feed trough for animals. Notice the angel does not command the shepherds to "go and see" but it certainly was an invitation. And it is the same invitation that is extended every Christmas, an invitation to come and see the Savior.

Jesus is not hard to find today. You don't have to make a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, all you need to do is respond to the invitation to come and see, then open your eyes and your heart to receive the gift of salvation for you. If you will turn to Him, you will discover that it is, indeed, good news that brings the greatest of joys.

Now, at this point, I suspect the shepherds were already on sensory overload. Their minds were racing, their hearts were beating out of their chest but the announcement wasn't over. Suddenly, the one angel is joined by a great host, a giant army, of angels. It must have been an unimaginable moment like one of those real life, immersive, IMAX movie theatres where you recline back and the screen goes from floor to the ceiling back behind you and then side to side so that you are totally immersed in what you are watching. And this great host of angels joins together in singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased." And here we find the angel's song. We'll take the brief remainder of our time this morning unpacking the words of their song.

The Song of the Angels

"Glory to God in the Highest." We must never forget that the star of Christmas is not a man in a red suit who brings presents. It is not the wise men, the shepherds, or even Mary and Joseph. The true star of Christmas is the Lord God Almighty. It is the story of His faithfulness, His love, His mercy, His grace, His power, and His Supremacy.

God made us and made everything that we have and enjoy in life. But we, as humans, rebelled against Him. We ignored Him and refused to submit to Him. And we have lived our lives trying to overthrow Him as the rightful ruler of the universe.

Yet, God did not toss us aside. He didn't destroy us so He could start over. Instead He patiently pursued us. From the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and then all throughout the Old Testament scriptures, we are pointed to His future rescue plan. And at Christmas, that rescue plan was initiated. God took the form of man, He became one of us. He entered our world as a baby in the most humble of circumstances. Why? Because He came to redeem us and to bring us to Himself.

This is why the angels praise God, because He alone deserves that praise. He deserves it from the angels and He deserves it from us. "Glory to God in the Highest!"

Praise Him for His incredible love and faithfulness and praise Him for His great plan of salvation made available to us in the person of child born in Bethlehem.

“And on the earth peace...” What is this peace the angels talking about? Is it world peace? Well, we have all heard the stories of armies having a Christmas truce and hearing both sides singing Christmas carols before the hostilities resume. Did Christ come so we can all just get along?

No, the angels are not announcing peace between warring nations. The peace spoken of here is the peace between God and Man. Now that the Messiah has come, the war between us and God is over. In the hymn “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” Charles Wesley writes “Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!” This is not a peace we have to hope for any longer. It is a peace that has already come to all who believe through the work of Christ.

In Romans 5:1-2, Paul says, “Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory. (Romans 5:1-2)

Because Jesus has come into the world to give His life as a payment for our sin, we, who receive this free gift by faith, can now be made right with God. The sin debt that once served as a barrier between God and man has now been destroyed for everyone who puts their faith and trust in Him. Through Jesus, we now have peace with God and are no longer His enemies.

And because we now have peace with God, we can know peace in many other areas of our lives as well. We have peace facing our own mortality. We no longer need to be afraid of the enemy death. In Christ, we will live even though we die. We have peace about the events of our lives. This peace is anchored to God’s faithfulness to His children and His sufficiency for our every need.

We have peace when we feel alone because God has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. We can “fear not” because He is with us. And we can have peace in our relationships with others because we more readily forgive because we have been forgiven. Having peace in these areas comes because we first have peace with God. This leads us to the last phrase in the angel’s song.

Who is the beneficiaries of this peace? The promise of the angels is for those “on whom His favor rests.” In other words, these things are true only for those who are true followers of Christ. It is only for believers, not the whole world.

Though lots of people celebrate Christmas, only those who truly embrace Christ can really understand the blessing of Christmas. Only those who put their faith in this Jesus will know the peace on earth that Jesus brings. Only true believers really understand the Good News that was proclaimed to the shepherds.

So, the question this Christmas should be: How do I experience the favor of God that brings me peace with God and then floods into the rest of my life? We must embrace the true Jesus. It is not enough to “believe in Jesus.” James 2:19 says that even the demons believe and know who Jesus is, and they shudder for they know their judgment is sure. So belief in Jesus is not enough. Your belief must move to trust.

You must trust in the true Jesus. The Jesus who was born in Bethlehem. The Jesus who was fully God and fully man. The Jesus who lived a perfect life and surrendered that flawless life for our sin. The Jesus who lived, who died and who was raised from the dead. Once you have seen Him for who He is you must run to Him and put all your hope in Him. You must trust His promise and embrace Him as Lord and Savior of your life.

I believe this is what the shepherds did. They hurried to Bethlehem. They found the baby just as the angels said, "lying in the manger." Since Mary "kept all these things in her heart" it is apparent to me that the shepherds shared their story. They told Mary and Joseph what the angels said.

But they not only told Mary and Joseph, they told everyone what had happened. These men who were social outcasts, who no one wanted to talk too, were now telling everyone the incredible news that the Messiah had come to save the world.

We are told that they "returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them." I know I am reading into the story a little bit here, but it sure seems to me that these shepherds put their faith in the work of this Christ child. I sense that even though they didn't understand fully, they already were coming to experience that peace with God.

You know, once we have come to know this peace with God and experience the great joy that comes with God's salvation, it is our privilege and joy to then tell everyone that we meet that God has sent us His Son! Our sin has been paid for! We do not have to fight God any longer!

We should make every effort to invite others to come and see Him and trust Him. We do this because we have experienced the good news for ourselves. In this, we join with the shepherds because we have heard the good news, the news that is way too good to keep to ourselves. And we join with the angels in praising God for His great plan of salvation that has come through the One born in Bethlehem whose birth we have come to celebrate. Let us pray.

Benediction: "May the peace of the Christ child, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Merry Christmas. Amen."