

What Christmas Is All About

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December Nights 2023 / Luke 2:8–20

- Do you ever feel like Charlie Brown this time of year?
- In his famous Christmas special, Charlie Brown is frustrated with the commercialization of Christmas and wonders what Christmas is all about.
- His friend Linus tells Charlie Brown that he knows what Christmas is all about, and it is the passage Cameron and Hannah just read.
- I want us to look at that passage together this evening, so go ahead and open your Bibles to **Luke 2:8-20**.
- We are only eight days away from Christmas.
- Some of us in this room are overwhelmed by that thought because we have presents to buy and wrap, food to cook, travel to prepare for, events to attend.
- For others, you may hate the idea of Christmas coming because you don't have those things...you are facing a lonely Christmas or have something painful that has happened that has robbed Christmas of its joy.
- Some who are here tonight might still be trying to figure out what Christmas really is all about because you are not yet a Christian.
- Wherever you find yourself tonight, over the next few moments, I want you to sit and reflect on what the angel said.
- Put your plans on pause for just a minute and breathe.

- Ask the Lord to help you hear these truths with fresh ears and an open heart.
- Look back at **verse 8...**
- The first people God tells about Jesus's birth are shepherds.
- These men would have been outcasts who were considered untrustworthy. Some sources indicate that they were so shady that their testimony wasn't admissible in court. They were ceremonially unclean, so they couldn't worship in the Temple like they should have.
- Even though they were spiritually and socially on the outs, God took the message to them.
- Let's look at what the angel said to see if it helps us see...

1) The angel's message.

- Pick up in **verse 9-11**.
- The message the angel proclaimed was good news that would bring great joy for all the people.
- Did you catch what he said?
- I want to highlight four quick statements the angel makes about this baby that makes this such good news.
- First, the baby is...

A) Savior

- This isn't just any baby. In fact, when an angel visited Joseph, who was the man who would care for Jesus as his earthly father, he said this:

Matthew 1:21 CSB

She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

- Jesus came to save people from their sins.
- That tells us something really important: We are sinners!
- You see, God created us for a relationship with himself and we chose to disobey him—The Bible calls that “sin.”
- Our sin separates us from God, and we can’t fix it on our own.
- The good news that the angel declared is that this baby, Jesus, came to save us from the penalty of our sin.
- This is fantastic news—instead of me trying to work our way to either be God or get back to him on our own, this baby came to do what I never could: he came to save us from our sins.
- What better news could there be than knowing that God came to save me and draw me back to himself?
- The angel didn’t stop there, though.
- He said not only is Jesus the Savior, he is the Savior...

B) For you

- The message that Jesus came to save sounds great unless you think it isn’t for you, right?
- Think about who he is talking to: the outcasts, the ones no one liked and who didn’t think they could be right with God.
- The angel said this baby is the Savior who has come *for you!*

- John said it this way:

John 1:12 CSB

But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name,

- Christmas is all about the fact that this baby we celebrate is Jesus, the one who came to save anyone who will believe in him.
- That belief goes beyond just knowing these truths in our head.
- Instead, it describes a belief that not only knows but also trusts wholeheartedly that Jesus is who he says he is and is the only way to be saved.
- Why? Because the angel also said he is the...

C) Messiah

- “Messiah” is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “anointed one.” In Greek, that word is “Christ.”
 - As Jeff pointed out last week, the baby in the manger had a mission that would take him to the cross to save us.
 - He was the fulfillment of the promises God had made in the Old Testament that he would send someone to save his people from their sins and deliver them into his kingdom.
 - The angel is saying, “This is the one! This is the Messiah God’s people have been waiting for for centuries.”
 - That is great news because it means God keeps his promises! He did what he said he would do.
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- There’s one more thing to highlight in what the angel

says. Jesus, this baby we are celebrating at Christmas, is the...

D) Lord

- This baby, who can do nothing on his own at this point, is in fact the Lord.
- The idea of “Lord” is stronger than this, but this baby the angel is proclaiming and we are celebrating is the one who is in charge of everything.
- He is the one who, after his work on the cross and his resurrection, will have the name that is above every name.
- He is the King over every king and the Lord over every Lord.
- And yet, here he is: a baby made snug by a mom who swaddled him and laid him in a feeding trough.
- He isn't in a palace wrapped in silk and fine linen.
- He is in a place where animals eat, wrapped up in the same kind of cloths that most babies were wrapped in.

- That's what makes the angel's proclamation good news of great joy!
- God is so good and so kind and so loving and so wonderful that, even though Jesus is Lord, he willingly humbled himself and came to rescue us.
- A God that good deserves our total devotion!
- When we are confronted with what Christmas really is all about, we are filled with joy and want to surrender ourselves to following the God who would send a Savior

for us who is Christ the Lord.

- After the angel declared these incredible truths, the whole sky was filled with angels glorifying God.
- The angels returned to heaven, and the shepherds were left alone in the field.
- We may not see angels today, but we know and understand more of what the angels said than even they did.
- So, how do we respond to this incredible message?
- Let's look at how the shepherds responded and see what we can find out.....

2) The shepherds' response.

- Read **verses 15-20** with me.
- God had spoken through the angels to the shepherd, and the first thing they did was go see for themselves that what God had said was accurate.
- Their first response was to follow through on what God said.
- “They hurried off” and found things just like God said they would.

- What did they do next?
- They told others what God had told them. Look at **verse 17**.
- We aren't totally sure who all is involved in the phrase, “all who heard it” in **verse 18**, but that seems like more

than just Mary and Joseph.

- They told whoever was around about what God had said.
 - Isn't that what we saw last week?
 - Last week, Jeff highlighted how Simeon and Anna held Jesus and talked about him.
 - He said, "We cannot hold Jesus close to us and not speak of him to everyone in our vicinity."
 - That's exactly what the shepherds did. After they saw Jesus, they told everyone what had happened.
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- So far, all this makes sense: They heard the message, they acted on it, and they told everyone what God had done.
 - The shepherd's next action might be a little surprising.
 - What did the text say they did when they were done seeing the baby?
 - Did the shepherds get a book deal or go on a speaking tour retelling their experience with the angel and with Jesus?
 - No...Look at **verse 20**...
 - "The shepherds *returned*..."
 - Just like the angels went back to heaven after declaring their message, the shepherds went back to work.
 - They went back to their flocks and their regular lives.
 - Something was different, though, wasn't it?
 - As they went back to their lives, they went back glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard.
 - They went back to work, they went back to their homes,

they went back to their routines, but now those routines were infused with praise for the God who came to earth as a baby.

- So, what do we do with the message that the angel declared to the shepherds and that we understand more fully than they did?
- We do the same thing: we obey what God says, we tell everyone we can, and we bring all that into the rhythms of our lives.
- We make sure that the next 8 days aren't either just full of busyness and stress or of emptiness and loneliness.
- Instead, we take time to listen, to let our hearts linger on the truth that this is all a celebration of a Savior who was born for you who is the Messiah who fulfilled the promises and is the Lord over all creation.

- In fact, I want to invite you to start that right now.
- Either look down at your Bible or up here at the screen again to see the words the angel spoke to the shepherds.
- As you do, listen:

Luke 2:10-11 CSB

But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people:

Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

- This is a time to celebrate that a Savior was born for you. That Savior is the anointed servant who is himself God in the flesh.
 - Let that truth saturate not just your mind but your heart and soul this evening.
 - In the quietness of this moment, bask in the glory of God displayed through a tiny baby—a baby who would one day die on the cross and be raised from the dead to save us from our sin and rule over all creation.
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- Our service is not yet complete—we still have an additional offering to participate in, and we still have one more song to sing.
 - This second offering is our Holiday Missions Offering. We collect this throughout the month of December, and what we give in this offering goes our ministry partners here and around the world so they can keep spreading the message of Christ to those who need to hear it.
 - The song we are going to sing is going to point us back to these verses. Sing them with a heart that desires to glorify the God who is born in the manger.
 - As we give, and as we sing, let's be like the shepherds. Let's glorify and praise God for what he's done.
 - After we give and sing, we are going to leave—the stillness of this moment will be broken. Let's return to our homes, jobs, schools, neighborhoods, gyms, grocery stores, coffee shops, and wherever else we go obeying, sharing, and rejoicing.