

Luke 2

6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Christmas 2025 Series –Live A Merry Christmas! #4 – Christmas Praise! Luke 2:6-20

Christmas is almost here!

We began this year's Christmas theme highlighting one of the oldest Christmas Carols – from the 1500's – "God Rest Ye **Merry** Gentlemen". **We noted that what "merry" meant then is far different than the countless ways we hear and see "Merry Christmas" today. In fact, the true meaning was much more:**

Robin Hood and his "*merry men*" weren't archers running around the woods in leotards having a happy time. They were mighty men. Skilled.

"Merry" meant "**mighty, powerful, strong**".

So, when we wish someone a "**merry Christmas**", we're praying for far more than a good time and joyful day. **It is our expressed desire for a "Merry, Mighty Christmas filled to the brim with Christ!"**

This week, as we roll into Christmas, we unwrap our final installment of **LIVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS**.

As we read the Christmas story, we often get so used to it that we miss the wonder in the familiar. For example, have you noticed -

- **Every time Christ is revealed, someone praises.**
- **Every time.**
- Young, old, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, angel, shepherd...
- **When heaven touched earth, praise erupted.**

PRAISE is a core component of the Christmas Story!

Help me out...

"Joy to the World, the Lord..."

"Go, tell it _____..."

"O Come _____..."

"Silent Night, _____..."

We are familiar with the songs of the season.

Did you know that Carols actually helped shape Christmas when culture about killed it?

At certain points in history, **the story of Christmas, particularly the celebration of Christmas, was at risk of being swallowed up by feasting**

and secular tradition. Here in America, “Christmas” had devolved into such revelry that decent folks stayed clear. It was even outlawed in some places!

What saved it? Not policy. Not legislation. Not “*Save Christmas*” campaigns.

It was something simpler: **Christmas Carols.** **Christmas Praise.**

People singing the story to one another.

Christmas carols carried the incarnation into homes and hearts, reminding the generations why this story matters.

Our theme Christmas Carol – “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” - Shocked and shook the world in the 1500’s!

- It broke through walls and barriers and spoke to hearts
- It presented the gospel of Jesus in a way that people didn’t know, even in churches of the day.
- **It presented His truth in a way that brought... joy. Live. Hope.**

In the midst of the Civil War, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who like so many had lost so much, wrote the words to the Song we know as “I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day” -

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."*

The war wasn’t over. Everything wasn’t ok. All wrong had not been made right. **But, the bells ringing... the Praise of Christmas...**

Wasn’t just background music — it was transformational. It drew people from their world to Him.

Just a few years before that, in 1849, in a struggling world, Edmund Sears penned ***"It Came Upon A Midnight Clear"***. Words you may not remember or have even heard –

*"O ye beneath life's crushing load Whose forms are bending low
Who toil along the climbing way With painful steps and slow
Look now, for glad and golden hours Come swiftly on the wing
Oh rest beside the weary road And hear the angels sing"*

- Ever feel that way? Do you think maybe your neighbors do? ***That our world does?***
- The words we do remember, and sing almost every year – ***"The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing". It still does!***

Carols didn't just contribute the Christmas, they rescued it.
Christmas Praise is an absolute essential to Live A Merry Christmas!

Let's see what we can learn from our simple, profound text:

I. The Event. Vs. 6-7. ***Something Happened!***

"Eu-angelion" – "Good news" – Gospel! An announcement!

Everything came from this. From Jesus!

- The beginning of the story
- The cause for celebration
- The source of wonder
- Unrestrained praise and unparalleled joy.
- Life. Light. Love.

God.

It was Jesus who changed everything!

II. The Encounter.

A. Angels and Shepherds.

- **Angels:** We kind of understand that. Job tells us they were there shouting for joy when the Creator spoke the heavens and earth into existence. (Job 38). What a moment!
But now – **God, Creator was born into His creation!** ***How could heaven stay silent?!!***

- **The Shepherds:** Another hint of a departure from the ordinary and expected: **It was anything but, and a message in itself!**

Shepherds –

- Teenagers probably.
- **Nobodies.** We don't know their names or anything about them...
- **Usually uneducated, unclean and unwelcome.**
- God's first Christmas Pageant – Shepherds!
- **God began with nobodies so everybody can have hope!**

B. But there were others, right? And what a list of characters!

We know them not because of who they were, but because of who Jesus became to them! Because of their encounter with Jesus!

1. Good guys: We know them because of their encounter with Jesus!

- Elizabeth & Zacharias & John the Baptist (Yet unborn!)
- Mary & Joseph
- Simeon & Anna in Jerusalem

2. Even Bad Guys: We know them because of their encounter with Jesus!

- Caesar Augustus
- Inn Keeper?
- Herod!

**Regardless of any other factor- sex, position, race, power, personality, age... -
What they had in common was their humanity:**

- Their common need for salvation (*"For all have sinned and come short..."*)
- And Jesus, "the Savior – the good tidings of great joy to all!"

Ultimately, every single person will be revealed and defined by their personal encounter with Jesus!

Every one of them had different stories — but their encounter with Jesus gave them the same response: praise!

III. The Explanation: The Message! The "Gospel"

A. The Angels to the Shepherds: vs. 10-12

“good tidings” – the word from which we get “gospel”

“great joy”

“all people”

The Answer: Jesus – Savior!

B. The Shepherds to everyone they met! Vs. 17

IV. The Experience. Vs. 16-17a

Knowing about something is not enough, is it?

Christmas gives us familiarity — but familiarity is not the same as faith.

***Knowing about Jesus* is not the same as *knowing* Him. The Shepherds:**

- Responded to the message.
- Put feet to their faith.
- Chose to let **what** they had been told **lead them to Jesus!**

Christmas nudges us to pause and ask the most important question in life:

Have I only heard the story... or have I met the Savior?

- **HE is what makes the difference.**
 - In every character then.
 - In every life now!

V. The Expression: Vs. 17-20

The miracle wasn't just lying in a manger.

The Christmas story never ends with information — it always ends with transformation. With proof. With praise.

PRAISE IS EVIDENCE OF A HEART THAT HAS ENCOUNTERED CHRIST.

In every single instance where Jesus was experienced personally, praise resulted.

- The **unborn John the Baptist** jumped with joy in his mother's womb at the name of Jesus!
- **Zechariah → A mute priest becomes a mouthpiece of the Spirit.**
- **Mary's Magnificat** (Luke 1:46+) → She burst forth with praise!

- **The Shepherds' Praise** → A quiet hillside becomes a sanctuary and *everyone they meet becomes their audience!*
- **Simeon's Blessing** → He had waited his whole life for the promise of seeing the Christ!
- **Anna's Thanksgiving** → An elderly widow of 84 years **becomes an evangelist of hope.** She told all who came to Jerusalem looking for redemption about Jesus!

Every instance of praise in the Christmas story is a moment when heaven and earth meet, and **Praise charges the moment with His presence.**

- Wherever Jesus is revealed, praise erupts.
- Wherever praise erupts, Jesus is revealed.

*****Praise doesn't just celebrate His presence — praise creates a place for His presence.**

Some **Shepherds** long ago **had a genuine, MERRY CHRISTMAS!** **Shepherd Tips:**

- **Turn from** whatever **dominates and drives** our lives, **to seek and see Jesus!**
- **Recognize and experience Jesus in everyday moments;** at work, in unexpected places, in little mangers not even noticed by the world. They never even went to church- they weren't allowed!
- **Wonder and Worship, not just observe**
- **Live in a way that makes others curios...**
- **Share Him** so that others can find Him too!
- **Let praise be our response** — not after everything changes, but **because Jesus has come!**

This Christmas doesn't need more lights, noise, presents, or pressure. That usually tends to distract... end... and ultimately disappoint.

What it needs is what the shepherds found: A moment with Jesus that fills the heart so fully it spills out as praise.

- **Praise is what happens when the soul encounters Jesus!**
- **Praise is how heaven meets earth — again — in us**
- **Praise turns Christmas from a busy holiday into a holy encounter.**