

## **Three Stories from the Birth of Jesus, Part 1, The Angels**

Luke 2:8-14

Quentin Smith, December 13, 2020

Good morning everybody and welcome to our online service this morning from Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. As many churches are doing, we are online during this pandemic and we're really thankful that you have signed in today to join us. As you watch this, this will be December the 13th. Sunday morning. And as I've reflected on that this week, I've wondered how that happened. It's been a very different year. It's less than two weeks to Christmas. And I know that during this difficult year, it has been filled with distraction. We've been trying to keep up with an ever-changing landscape of what we ought to be doing what we've been told to do. It's been, I know for myself, easy to lose focus on thankfulness and joy because our attention has been forced into other areas. So for the next three weeks, we wanted to take a break from that excellent series that pastor Jeremy has been preaching for us through Ephesians and we're going to do a three week mini-series for the Christmas theme. I'm going to talk about angels this week, Kevin Laser will come next week and talk about the shepherds and Pastor Jeremy on Christmas Eve will wrap it up with the Wisemen, the magi. With the aim of reestablishing really our sense of awe and of wonder, our sense of thankfulness and joy to the Lord for all things, I'm going to invite you to open up to the book of Luke chapter two. I'm going to read for you the first 20 verses of Luke chapter two. And then we'll talk about that. Luke says this:

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited Earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger [that's literally a feeding trough], because there was no room for them in the inn. In the same region, there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shown around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they came in a hurry and found a way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

We'll leave the reading there. This is a well-known passage; this is a passage that we often come to at this time of the year to remind ourselves about the birth of Christ and the coming of Christ. I want to focus today mainly on verses eight through 14. But by way of introduction, we need to make some comments for context. I want you to turn back a couple of pages to Luke chapter one, we're just going to read the first four verses there.

In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

Luke says that he joined the many who undertook to document the things that had happened, the things that God had accomplished. Now, Luke is a physician, and he's obviously then used to detail. He wants to document accurately just as these things were handed down to us by eyewitnesses and servants of the word. He's investigated everything carefully from the beginning. And he writes it out in consecutive order for this person called the office, somebody of significant social standing. And its purpose is that the office might know the exact truth about the things that he'd been taught. And as I started through this, I was arrested by this passage, and I had had three thoughts. The first thought honestly, was, as a physician, I actually felt sorry for the office having to read this. But maybe handwriting was different in those days. The second was a question: What's my message around this time of the year? That phrase that Luke relied on the information handed down by servants of the word caught my attention. It's the same phrase that is used in Acts chapter 26, when Paul recounts how Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus, and how he made him a minister of the gospel. And he goes on to specify what that message would be. He says this to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light from the dominion of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance amongst those who have been sanctified by faith in me. And in that sense, I realized that we are all servants of the word. We serve by passing that word along to others, one generation to the next. You have your faith because somebody was a servant of the word to you. And so what is our message around Christmas time? And the third thing was that phrase "exact truth". The eyewitness accuracy that Luke sought to write to the office, the office could take to the bank. The office could stand on that as foundational. And that's what we can do today. The past is that we just read his truth. It happened. And we can rely on that, as we discuss it. Well, Luke goes on in chapter one to talk about Zacharias and Elizabeth, the visitation of Gabriel to Zacharias to tell him that Elizabeth would be with child and that that child would grow up to be a prophet who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and that the fulfillment of Malachi 400 years before would be in John, his son, and that this child would be someone who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Luke then documents further the visit of Gabriel to Mary where he informs her that her cousin Elizabeth is pregnant with child and that she is going to conceive through the Holy Spirit and bear the Messiah. Nothing is impossible for God, essentially saying that the word "impossible" doesn't appear in God's vocabulary. And he records how Elizabeth, Mary and John, full of the Holy Spirit, prophesy. Look at verse 50 in chapter one. Mary says this: "And His mercy is upon generation after generation towards those who fear Him."

He also record Zacharias, if you go across the page to verse 68. Zechariah says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people." Now, bear in mind that Jesus isn't even born yet. But the prophecy is as good as done because it's in the mind of God. He has accomplished redemption for his people. And then in verse 74, he goes on to say, "To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our

enemies, might serve Him without fear.” Remember, Mary said that mercy was for those who fear Him, and Zacharias is that we would serve him without fear, and so ushers in this era of a paradox; this Christ centered paradigm; this holy juxtaposition; this seeming contradiction that those who fear are not afraid, that when we fear God and are humbled by Him and turn to Him and seek His forgiveness, then He has mercy. And we become those who serve Him without fear. Chapter Two goes on and starts now in those days. With all the momentum of Gabriel's visitation to Elizabeth and to Mary, Elizabeth's pregnancy with John and the birth of John, and the prophecy of all of this incredibly rich information, and promise in those days, with all that build up behind the scenes, Luke says that Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, called for a census. Now, Augustus was emperor in Rome from 27 BC to 14 AD. And from time to time, of course, as was the habit of the Roman government, they would call a census primarily for taxation, which was about every six years, and it was to determine the tax base. The way they did it was to instruct people to go to their own city which is the city where they were born. This would have been a great hardship for a lot of people, especially if you'd moved far away from where you were actually born. But I don't think the Romans cared. This was how they did things. This was just how they organized it. And so for Joseph and Mary, they traveled south, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a distance of about 90 miles, 150-160 kilometers. That's a long way when you're walking. That's a very long way when you're far along in a pregnancy. But at the time of Jesus' birth, we know the reign is of that of Herod the Great. In Israel, you'll remember that it was Herod who after Christ was born was so paranoid about a threat to his position by this king of the Jews that had been born, that he ordered all the children, the male child children under two in the Bethlehem area to be murdered. And we also know that Herod died in four BC. So that tells us then that the Roman calendar that we use is incorrect, and that Jesus must have been born sometime before four BC. As we turn the page, and as we look from verses, four down to seven, briefly on route to our passage today, I want you to see the sovereign hand of God. Number one, in moving Joseph back to his ancestral home of Bethlehem, in verse four. All of that background of the Roman taxation, the need, the timing of the census, all came together to fulfill Micah's prophecy in Micah 5:2, that the Messiah would actually be born in Bethlehem. Joseph was a descendant of David, who'd also been born in Bethlehem. And that relevance was that prophecy was made 720 years before that, in Micah's time. And of course, it had to be fulfilled. Mary obviously travels with Joseph because she's pregnant with Jesus. And while they're in Bethlehem, she gives birth to her firstborn son. We understand that there was no room at the inn. This would have been a busy time for Bethlehem, there would have been people coming into Bethlehem for the census and remember that they would also have been a large Roman cohort that would have been administrating that census. And those people probably took up all the public accommodation that there was in Bethlehem. Second thing is that Mary wraps them in cloths and lays Him in a manger, literally a feeding trough. That seems to be a very small detail. But it had to be that way. Because that was the sign that the angel gave to the shepherds to authenticate that what they said was true. Tradition has assumed that because it was a feeding trough that she gave birth in a stable. That might be true, it's likely to be true. It certainly wasn't going to be a private place. But it was very unlikely that there were two babies that night that were placed in feeding troughs in Bethlehem.

Again, the sovereign hand of God. But I want to just mention a detail. By the time the wise men come, the magi to look to worship the King of the Jews. Matthew two verse 11 says they came to a house. So in case you're seeing that, and you're confused, I think the explanation for that is that some time has passed from that first night to the time that the magi come. And so, as Bethlehem may have thinned out with the moving of people away after the census, they may have been able to find better accommodation than they initially had. So with that, by means of introduction, we come to verse eight. And if you're taking notes, I want to break this passage down into three

parts. First of all, the angels presence. Second, the angels message. And third, the angels response. It's Have a look at that together.

First: The angels presence verses eight and nine. It says, "In the same region, there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them. And the glory of the Lord shown around them. And they were terribly frightened." This tells us that it's in the same region. It's nearby. It's walking distance because they walked to Bethlehem. But there are some shepherds there on nightshift, it might have been a field not unlike this. They're guarding the sheep from predators, no doubt, maybe the sheep were being raised for slaughter for sacrifices, hard to know. What we do know is that they were outside. This was just another night. This was nothing out of the ordinary. They've done this before they've done this often. And we're not told what time this happened. But one thing we do know is that it caught them off guard. No doubt. Verse nine says in the angels of the Lord suddenly stood before them in the glory of the Lord shown around them. The word "suddenly" doesn't appear in the original text, but it's certainly implied because an angel appeared. He wasn't there. And then he was. And along with the appearance there is this manifestation of what Luke says: the glory of the Lord shining around him. And that's enough for them. It's enough to make them mega phobia, very afraid. It's an unusual event. It happened rarely. And I know that it's never happened to any of you.

So I wanted to ask you, what do we know about angels? Well, it's just a few things. Firstly, they're created spiritual beings that haven't always existed. They are part of the universe that God created. Nehemiah 9:6 says, "You alone are the Lord. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host...and the heavenly host bows down before You." Psalm 148:2,5 says, "Praise Him all His angels; praise Him all His hosts; Let them praise the name of the Lord for He commanded, and they were created." They are also spirits or spiritual creatures, and they don't ordinarily have physical bodies. They can't usually be seen by us unless God gives us special ability to see them. You'll remember in Numbers chapter 22, verse 31, the Lord opening the eyes of Balaam. The donkey was aware of the angels' presence. Balaam hadn't seen the angel and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in his way with his drawn sword in his hand, and his way had been obstructed by the angel. And in Second Kings, chapter six verse 17, Elisha prays that the eyes of his servant may be opened and the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw and behold, the mountain was full of horses, Chariots of Fire all around Elisha. Thirdly, they exercise moral judgment, and they are highly intelligent. What it means to exercise moral judgment is that they are capable of sinning.

Second Peter 2:4 says that if for God, if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell, and committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment. Jude six says, "Angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandon their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." We know also from time-to-time angels took bodily form to appear to various people in Scripture. Hebrews 13:2 tells us not to neglect hospitality; not to neglect to show hospitality to strangers even because by this, some have entertained angels without knowing it. We know that they do not marry (Matthew 22:30). We know that they're incredibly powerful. (Psalm 103:20). We know in Scripture that the term "the angel of the Lord" is often a reference to Christ, a pre-incarnate Christ, visitation to the earth before Christ came in this time. Genesis 16:10, with Hagar, and Genesis 22:12, when Abraham is willing to sacrifice Isaac, they remind us that the unseen world is real.

Angels also remind us of the greatness of God's love for us and is planned for us. What I mean by that is that there is no mention made that they are made in the image of God as we are. And there's also no mention made that

grace applies to them. But rather when they sin, it seems that they are cast into hell. We will apparently even judge them (1 Corinthians 6:3). And that's in a way that is not really clear in Scripture, but we do know that Hebrews chapter one verse 14, says that they are ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation, that's you and I. So it may be that we will, as saints, judge or oversee or govern them in some way that is not really clear in glory. But they are therefore a reminder of the great blessing that we have in Christ.

Angels are also an example to us in that they are constantly worshipping (Revelation chapter five). Furthermore, they carry out some of God's plans. They brought this message to the shepherds in the field that night. They carry out God's judgments. You remember that it was the angel of death that brought the plague upon Egypt's firstborn. You'll remember that there was an angel who brought the pestilence upon Israel in Second Samuel chapter 24. It was an angel who struck King Agrippa first in Acts chapter 12. Because he didn't give glory to God. It's an angel that seizes the serpent and binds them for 1000 years in Revelation 20. It's an archangel who's going to proclaim Christ's Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16). It's the angels that will gather together His elect from the four winds (Mark 13:27). And yet, they are acutely aware of the existence of God, the rebellion of man. And so Luke chapter 15, verse 10, says "In the same way I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents". Magnificent creatures, powerful creatures, all inspiring. terrifying. What about the glory of the Lord that seemed to accompany them? I was reminded of Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, his saving experience in Acts chapter nine. And if you read through that chapter, and you read through all the way through Acts, where he explains at different points what happened. It seems that there was a light from heaven that flashed around him and the Lord spoke to him. Later on in the book of Acts, as Paul explains what happened to both the people in Jerusalem and before King Agrippa, we know that despite it being the middle of the day, this light was so bright that it blinded him, a light that he described as being brighter than the sun; a light, which he says, caused all of his companions to fall to the ground.

Timothy tells us that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords who dwells in unapproachable light (First Timothy 6:16). You'll remember that Moses hid his face after his encounter with God on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34, because of the afterglow of his encounter with God. Jesus Himself is called the radiance of God's glory. Folks, there just seems to be this manifestation of the glory of God that accompanies the presence of God or the angel messengers of God.

Well, let's pause and ask ourselves, what's the application of the angels' presence? Well, the presence of an angel number one, is a reminder that we live straddled between heaven and earth. We live in this world, but we are not of this world. There is a world beyond this that we are not always aware of, that we are going to with spiritual beings that we don't interact with, but they exist, myriads of them.

And secondly, I want to ask the question: Do our lives reflect the glory of the Lord? Are we close enough to God for that to happen? You'll remember that the Jewish leaders in Acts four recognize the disciples as having been with Jesus, there was something about them that was just different. It certainly isn't light. That's not our experience. But Paul, in Second Corinthians chapter two, verse 14, says, "But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place, for we are a fragrance of Christ to God amongst those who are being saved and amongst those who are perishing, to the one in the realm of death to death and to the other an aroma of life to life. And who is adequate for these things?" You know, when you go camping and you sit around that campfire, you smell of smoke,

you smell of campfire? Do we smell of God? What fragrance are we giving off? Fragrance is something that you can't see but you know it's there. Are others able to see the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ in our lives because we've been close to the Lord?

Well, the second point I want to raise with you this morning is the angel's message. Luke 2:10-12 says,

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

We've just described an angel arriving, appearing before the shepherds, the magnificence, the power, the majesty, the glory of the Lord. They're frightened. In fact, they're terrified. And he says, "Do not be afraid." How can he say that? What was the basis for his confidence? How can he reassure them? Well, the answer is he wasn't there to carry out a punishment. He was there with good news. In fact, he was named with great news, good news of great joy. He as an angel had the scoop, the inside story, and I want to understand this fully. I want you to, to put yourselves in the place of the angel. I know it's hard for you just to imagine that you're an angel. But let's do it for a second, okay. You have been privy, since your creation, to the full reality of the spiritual world. The presence and the glory of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You've seen God work in the history of his people from the beginning. You've seen obedience. You've seen disobedience. You've seen rebellion. You've watched Lucifer fall, and take with him several angels and be banished from heaven. You know about his purpose to dishonor the name of God. And yet, you are also aware that there is a plan. There is a plan to rescue a people, a people that God would call his own. First Peter 1:10, says as to the salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you that is to saints, made careful searches and inquiries seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating, as he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed that they were not serving themselves, but you, you saints in these things, which now have been announced to you, through those who preach the gospel to you, by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. And he goes on to say things into which angels long to look.

Peter said that the prophets had incomplete revelation as to the who and the when of this great salvation. They knew it would happen. They just didn't know when or how the mystery of His will would be revealed to us in the Gospel. Peter says, this mystery that the angels had longed to look into, the mystery which Colossians 1:26 says has been hidden from past ages and generations. But now it's being manifested to the saints to whom God will to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. All that suspense, all that longing, all that waiting, was over. The time had come. God the Father just sent his Son into the world to be born of a virgin and to start his incarnate life that would ultimately end up in him being the sacrificial lamb who once and for all, account for our sins. And He would take on Himself the sins of all the people and provide for the Father a people who would have the relationship with God restored and would worship Him. This was the fulfillment of the words of Zacharias: a people who would fear Him. And because of that fear would not be afraid.

What a glorious paradox! A Saviour had been born! And it meant everything to heaven. The question is, what does it mean to us? Salvation, forgiveness of sin, the knowledge that we can bring nothing good before God and yet He forgives us. What a message!

Well, thirdly, we want to talk about the angel's response in verses 13 and 14. The first point was the angels presence was really frightening. But it was a reminder of a spiritual world of a righteous God and Judge who is holy and glorious, and those who are around Him reflect that glory. The second point was the angel's message of good news of great joy. A Saviour had been born that would take away our sins and allow us to worship God without fear. Because we fear Him, we are not afraid. But Thirdly, I want to talk about the angel's response. Read verses 13 and 14:

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased."

You know, one Angel was enough for the shepherds. But suddenly, that one angel is joined by a multitude of the heavenly host. It's as if heaven cannot contain itself. It's as if heaven is going to burst. The plan of God the Father to initiate a rescue plan for the souls of men causes the angels to exalt and give glory to God in the highest. It's as if those who understand the best can do nothing but praise. They will not be silenced. They cannot be hushed. The anticipation of Christ crucified and then glorified in their minds is as good as done. Zachariah said that He has accomplished redemption for His people. They worshipped him for who he was. They worshiped him for being God. "Glory to God in the highest." Turn with me to Revelation chapter five, we're going to enter the throne room of God, and we're going to have a sneak peek of real worship in heaven.

I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong Angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures in the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will rain upon the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be

“blessing and honour and glory and dominion forever and ever.” And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen”, and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Jesus, as the Lamb of God, brings great glory to God primarily as the Savior sent to Earth, sent to die, sent to purchase with His blood for God men from every tribe and tongue and nation. And angels on both ends of history exalt God, the lamb, the Lord Jesus for that reality. Folks, when we understand the significance of our salvation, the cost of our salvation, the glory that Christ brought to God, in His purchase of us, when we truly understand that, it is life changing. It makes us want to live according to that knowledge. He has declared us to be righteous when we know that we are not. And so we worship. And I don't mean on a Sunday. To say that the result is that we come to worship on a Sunday is a misrepresentation of the size of this. We worship with our lives. We worship as we desire to grow into what he has already declared. We worship as we bring glory to God and pursue that righteousness by grace. He has declared us to be righteous. And now we try and live in that way. We worship Him every time we say no to sin. We worship Him with every fiber of our being; we worship Him so that our lives become a living sacrifice. We worship Him when we give and meet the needs of others. We worship Him when we demonstrate the fruit of the Holy Spirit when we tend the sheep. And when we gather on a Sunday, we gather with hearts that are filled with wonder and awe that he could have saved us in the first place, let alone blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. And our coming together on a Sunday is just coming to celebrate what has been happening in our hearts all week, and to encourage one another all the more as we see that day approaching. When we worship, we join in for a moment what is already going on 24/7 in Revelation five in heaven.

I know that we've been prevented from gathering to worship for part of this year. And that is important. But we haven't been prevented from worshipping. No one can prevent us from worshipping God. But if this is not the kind of worship that we're bringing; if we're bringing God the sick, and the lame, and the blind sacrifices. If we're finding serving God tiresome then we have become like Israel was in Malika his time. There are times when God doesn't want us to worship. And that's when it's fake. He doesn't want us to worship when it's not sincere, when it's not real from the heart, and Malachi 1:10 says, ““Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you’, says the Lord of hosts, ‘nor will I accept an offering from you.”” I just want us to be really careful. What we're fighting for during this time of the Coronavirus, there are times when God says He doesn't want us to worship. And if we're going to stamp our feet and want to come to worship, and yet bring him that which is offhand and careless and insincere; if we're going to bring him worship that is going through the motions, you might even call it lame worship. Maybe this is a time where we can reset and rethink about what worship really is. The angels had it right. Is it about our rights? Or is it about God?

Is our worship really about who He is? And let me say this, when was the last time we felt so strongly about prayer? When was the last time we felt so strongly about cutting out sin in our lives? Why is it we can feel so strongly about gathering and yet the sexual sin sometimes amongst us? Why is it we can feel so strongly about gathering on a Sunday yet we neglect one another's needs.

I want to encourage us to be part of the offerings that the church has right now. If this is all we have and we can do as we gather, let's do it. And let's look forward to a time when things will be as they were, better than they were, different from what they were where we bring our hearts like the angels do. And let's be willing to be really persecuted for sharing the message. Because if your life is persecution free, open your mouth, start talking about

Christ and you'll see that real persecution will come. The angels worshipped him for who he was. But number two, they worshipped Him for His plan: on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased. Folks, the peace that we have is that freedom from fear; it is a spiritual peace. It comes from our relationship being restored with God. It is the only kind of peace that really exists that has any value at all.

It's a great privilege. It's unexplainable. It is the peace that passes understanding. It's the gospel. And how do we experience this peace? Well, by being pleasing to God, and in short, we're pleasing to God when we have faith. (Hebrews 11:1-2,5-6).

We don't know much about Enoch. We know that he was the seventh generation from Adam. He lived for 365 years and was the father of Methuselah. And he apparently didn't die. God apparently took him. And Hebrews tells us that he was pleasing to God. But we also know that he had faith (v.5). And verse six tells us that it is impossible to please God without faith. So the first element of faith is that we must believe that He is. We have to believe in God in order to have faith in Him. You cannot prove God just like you can't prove the wind. But you can see the effect of God, you just need to look around. In the same way that you can't see the wind, but you see the effect of the wind when it blows the branches. You can see what God has done.

He's told us by His creation; you see evidence of his existence (Psalm 19:1). The heavens are telling the glory of God, and their expanse is declaring or shouting, if you will, the work of His hands. And just as an aside, not only do we believe in God, but we believe God. And Abraham did that. And he believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. And that manifests itself in a devotion to the Word of God. So we believe in God, and we believe God; we believe what He says. And what He says is true. And we trust that. But the second element of how we please God is the second element of faith is that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. And I want to ask you this morning, what have you been seeking this year? What are you going to be seeking next year? Seeking is a verb. It's an action word. What has God taught us this year in our personal lives?

Where is he moving our hearts in the new year? What will I be deliberate about? What will I be intentional about? Will I be intentional about how I worship? Will I be intentional to please God? Pastor Jeremy last week said that the real pandemic is passivity of men in the church. I think he's right. Folks, it's time to put passivity away. It's time to take initiative. It's time to put your shoulder to the wheel. It's time to live your life for Christ. Do I? What about my family life? Am I lacking in leading my wife? loving my family? Do I need to forsake secret sin? pornography perhaps? Am I going to be intentional in seeking out opportunities for the gospel? Can I make a suggestion? First Corinthians four verse one, Paul describes himself as a servant of Christ and a steward of these mysteries of God. Can we as a church consider our main aim? Can we consider that we understand the mystery that has been revealed to us? It needs to be shared by those who love God and whose testimony and walk is consistent with his message. What better time to be in lockdown with God, the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit and your Bible. Paul was in prison. That was real lockdown. And yet every single guard that he had knew about Christ. Lockdown doesn't stop us from worshiping. And it doesn't stop us from being pleasing to God, by having faith and pursuing what we know we ought to pursue. So will you please God by being a channel of the gospel, will you be a servant of the word as Luke wrote?

Our time is up. But before I leave you, I want to take you to Jude chapter one. There is only one chapter in Jude but let's look at verse 14. Jude is a book about apostasy and apostasy is a departure from the faith; a departure

from true biblical faith and this book is full of warnings about those who seek to derail believers. But who will be judged for doing that? Jude writes in verse 14,

It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

He says there is a second coming that Christ will bring and He will execute judgment on those whose attributes are in verse 16, those who mock and are unbelievers.

Then it says in v. 17,

But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

Jesus told us that there would people who would oppose us they would be around.

Verse 20 and this is where I want to see us:

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Now to Him, who was able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time, and now and forever, amen.

Folks, there's been a great deal of distraction this year. Let's not let it draw us away from the joy and the thankfulness in Christ.

Focus on verses 20 and 23, where God is able to keep us from stumbling and able to make us stand by faith in Christ in glory. And I'm praying that that would really encourage you and I'm praying that Luke's efforts to record precisely this visitation of the angels will help you, number one, to remember that their presence is a reminder that this world is not our hope; that heaven is real. Number two, that the message of the angels was good news of great joy because it was about a savior being born a man. And thirdly, remember that the response of the angels was and remains overwhelming: worship. It was worship. Well, my hope for you today and for the rest of this year and into next year is that you'll be able to be refocused on the joy and the thankfulness and the hope that is ours in Christ, the hope that the angels first brought to us so many years ago.

Let's pray together. Father, we're so thankful to be able to just experienced some of being outside here and just some of the glories of your creation. We're so thankful for the angel's message. And I pray, Lord, that You would

encourage our hearts through the Scriptures. Thank you for the event that happened so long ago. Thank you for sending Christ, who made a world of difference in our lives and in the world. Thank you that you have redeemed us and bought us back. And I pray that today, all the saints everywhere throughout this world would be looking to You with hearts and lives that are filled with worship. And it's in Christ's name because of His sacrifice that we can pray this. Amen.

Well, I'm thankful that you've joined us today. I hope that this has been encouraging. If you want to know more about us, or church or activities or what we believe, just visit us on [grace fellowship chilliwack.com](http://gracefellowshipchilliwack.com) and until we see you again, God bless and have a wonderful day.