

The Promise Of Christmas

Luke 2:4-12

We live a world that is saturated in news. It seems like most of that news is bad news. We could all use a little good news.

“Great joy” is not our common response to the news.

You’ll get notifications on your smart phones or watches during the service, and you probably won’t say, “Well, that’s good news.”

We’re triggered and suddenly aware of something happening, and it’s not going to be good.

We brace ourselves, wondering if it’s a new variant, a new world threat, some catastrophic event happening in the world, another sports figure who has said something incredibly stupid.

Each notification of news is usually not exciting.

Social scientists tell us that the news has a bad news bent to it. News has a negative bias. We blame the news outlets, but it what we tend to be drawn to. About 90% of news stories have a negativity bias, a bent toward bad news. It doesn’t just feel negative. It actually is negative. Because we are the consumers, we actually drive that.

It used to be that the news came to us, but now we are consumers. We can go to the news sources and scroll until we find what we want to read and click on that. We control what headlines by what we choose to read and we tend to look for the more negative stories. This is what creates the bad news bent.

We have the amygdala in our brain. It is commonly thought to form the core of a neural system for processing fearful and threatening stimuli including detection of threat and activation of appropriate fear-related behaviors in response to threatening or dangerous stimuli. It is the detector of danger or anything that is a threat to us.

We are wired to see everything as a problem. This has contributed to a new concept called “doom scrolling” that just recently appeared in Webster’s dictionary. You don’t know why, but you school through to look for bad news. You begin by looking at bad news, then we look at bad news and all day, and we end our day by looking at bad news.

Christmas is not “the most wonderful time of the year” for everyone. It is a sad and depressing time for many.

We often sing, “‘Tis the season to be jolly,” but Christmas is not always a happy season for many.

One doctor wrote: “There's nothing like the festive season to force you to face the fact that life isn't always as joyful and triumphant as we're lead to believe.”

The angel said to the shepherds, “*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*” Luke 2:10

1. The Promise Of Good News.

The angel came with a message to comfort and cheer hearts. He came with an announcement intending to make Christmas a blessing, not a burden. The angel's message was one intended to bring “great joy.”

At Christmas, we are reminded where to find strength. In a season where the weight of mental health is at an all-time high, we want to be reminded again of the strength we can find in the joy of the Lord.

We need “*Good news of great joy*” because we are struggling. We are tired and weary. We need peace and grace for this journey of life.

For single people, in particular, Christmas and New Year can be a very isolating time. Even if you're surrounded by family and friends, this time of year can bring more than its fair share of stress, noise, anxiety, and squabbles. Add this to long-standing money worries, family conflicts, job problems, or bereavement, and it's no wonder calls to helplines about depression and suicide rise dramatically during the festive season.

Some of the reasons people find the Christmas season to be a difficult time:

- Separation or divorce can leave people celebrating Christmas and the holiday season alone.
- People who have lost a loved one are especially thoughtful of that loss.
- The busy activities of the holidays can place a significant burden on already full schedules.
- The costs involved with the holidays can place a significant burden on already tight budgets.

A survey found that over 45% of those who responded said that they dread the festive season. And when asked, more than 57% said they feel worse during the holiday season.

You may be facing circumstances this Christmas season that leave you sad or anxious, but there is something in Christmas that ought to fill your heart with joy.

The good news is that God is our Prince of Peace.

God is not primarily in the bad news business. God is primarily in the Good News business. The reason why God sent Jesus Christ to this planet was to bring joy, not judgment. Do you know where “joy” comes from? It comes from being content. It comes from being satisfied. The reason why there is such little joy in our culture and our society is because we are living in a very dissatisfied society.

Even though personal income, home ownership, and investment portfolios are at an all-time high, we are still an unsatisfied people. One sociologist revealed that in 1900, the average American wanted seventy-two different things and considered eighteen of them essential. Today, the average person in America wants five-hundred things and considers one hundred of them essential.

80% of working Americans say they are in the wrong job for them. People are totally dissatisfied in the workplace.

People are looking for satisfaction in the wrong places. Neither prosperity nor possessions will bring you lasting satisfaction. Nothing except a personal relationship with God can bring you true and total satisfaction. Nothing can give that to you except Jesus Christ.

2. The Promise Of Great Joy.

We don't gather at Christmas to celebrate something that happened a long time. We gather to celebrate that the something that happened a long time ago has the power to change our lives right now.

We celebrate that He came the first time, and we also celebrate that He will come again, not as an innocent baby, but as the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

The early church decided to pick a day to celebrate the day of Jesus' birth. December 25 is not a random day. It actually is the winter Solstice. This is week that contains the shortest day of the year. The day when we have the least amount of sunlight. This was intentional to remind us that Jesus was born in the coldest and darkest day of the year.

Jesus was born to bring light and life into the cold, dark world.

“In Him was life, and that Life was the Light of all mankind. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4-5

Some people come to church at Christmas because it’s a tradition, but many others come because you are experiencing the coldness and darkness of life like never before, and you need the light and life that Jesus’ coming can bring.

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:4-12

The message of the scripture is not, “Put your hope in this life.” The message of scripture is, “Put your hope in Jesus.” What makes this Good News is that a Savior has been born, and He has come at just the right time. The Good News of scripture is that Jesus has been born to save us from our sins and become the hope of the world.

Letter to Santa

Dear Santa,

There are three boys living at my house. Jefferey is 2. Jarred is 4. Jake is 7. Jeffrey is good some of the time. Jarred is good some of the time. Jake is good all of the time. I am Jake!

That mentality of a 7-year-old spills over to us. We grade ourselves on the scale, and the only hope that we have is to be saved is by Jesus. Some people complain that there is only one way. It is the only way, and it’s a free gift that God has offered to us.

The announcement that a Savior has been born is not made for the first time in Luke 2. Genesis 3 is the first announcement right in the middle of Adam and Eve’s sin. Everything is broken, and God is offering hope.

What is The Promise of Christmas?

You cannot understand the Old Testament apart from The Promise. You cannot understand the New Testament apart from The Promise. You cannot understand Christmas apart from The Promise. You can't understand your purpose in life apart from The Promise.

The Promise goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had sinned. God had put them in a perfect environment. No pollution, no traffic, no sickness, no taxes, no stress, no hassle. The Garden of Eden made Disney World look like a trash dump.

God did point out one tree in the Garden. It was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He said to Adam and Eve, “You can have anything you want in this garden, but don't eat the fruit of that tree.” Adam and Eve disobeyed, and our fallen world is the result. The Promise was the good news in the midst of all that bad news.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” Genesis 3:15

From the moment that God made that promise, He began to orchestrate the events of history to make predictions to prove His words would become true in Jesus. God would keep The Promise to send that One into the world who would take care of Satan, take care of sin, take care of sorrow, and take care of suffering. That Promise was announced by the angel as good news.

3. The Promise Of Grace For Everyone Who Believes.

The Good News is for all people. What makes it Good News is that you're included in the Good News. The word “shepherd” was a derogatory term. They were considered unclean and outsiders. If the Good News can be true for them, it can be true for you. They came just as they were. The angel didn't ask, “Are you going to wear that?” He didn't ask them to shower. They just came because they were included. What makes it Good News is you're included, and the Good News affects you.

The wise men and the shepherds are the two opposite ends of the social spectrum. God wanted us to know that the Good News was for everyone.

From the Christmas story, we walk away with some life-changing lessons:

- From Joseph, We Learn That For Every Problem There Is A Promise.
- From Mary, We Learn That For Every Promise There Is A Provision.
- With Jesus, We Will Learn That For Every Provision There Is A Purpose.

That is why the Christmas message is such good news. Behind every problem, there is a promise. Behind the problem of sin, there is The Promise of salvation.

“For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Jesus.” 2 Corinthians 1:20

A Savior is just exactly what we needed!

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist.
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer.
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

We all need a Savior! That's why the angel says, *“for all the people.”* Luke 2:10

Why do we all need salvation? Because of sin. We were all born in sin. We all live in sin, and apart from Jesus Christ, we all die in sin.

Billy Joel, the extremely talented and popular musician once said, " I wasn't raised Catholic, but I used to go to mass with my friends, and I viewed the whole business as a lot of very enthralling hocus-pocus. There is a guy...nailed to a cross and dripping blood and everyone is blaming themselves for that man's torment, but I said to myself, 'Forget it. I had no hands in that evil. I had no original sin. There is no blood of any sacred martyr on my hands. I pass on all of this.'"

“And they say there's a heaven for those who will wait.
Some say it's better, but I say it ain't.

I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints.
The sinners are much more fun.” —Billy Joe, “Only the Good Die Young”

If you pass on God, God will pass on you. Until you admit you need salvation and until you receive salvation, you can never experience the Good News of Christmas.