

ESF, Lord's Day Service Message
12/20/2015

The Good News of Great Joy
Luke 2:8-18

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

*¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

The night Christ was born, an angel appeared to some shepherds in a field and said to them, "...I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

The angel said that the news of the birth of Christ was good news of great joy not only for the shepherds, but for all the people in the

world. Why is the news of Christ's birth good news of great joy for all people? If that is true what does the news have to do with you and me today?

News of fulfilled promise

A few months ago, a 15 year old girl, Alexis in Utah was hospitalized for brain cancer treatment. Her family could not afford to pay for treatments. Then a local businessman made an anonymous pledge by sending a check of \$40,000 to Primary Children's Hospital to help her family. But the promise turned out to be too good to be true.

As treatments for Alexis began, it became evident that there was no account to charge. For her family, it was a setback. But they were not dwelling on the broken promise. Instead, they're focusing on Alexis' recovery. Thankfully, while the promised pledge fell through, Alexis has received numerous gifts from others.

One of the reasons why this world is filled with bad news is because people do not or cannot keep their promises.

But God will never, ever lie to us, or break any of His promises.

God is not human, that he should lie,

not a human being, that he should change his mind.

Does he speak and then not act?

Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19).

By sending Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, God proved that He surely keeps all His promises. God promised that He would send the Savior of the world from the moment the first man, Adam, sinned (Genesis 3:15). God had repeated this promise again and again (Genesis 22:18; 2Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 6:7; 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Micah 5:2).

So God's people who heard this promise lived waiting and hoping for the coming of the Savior. While God's people waited for the

day that God would keep this promise, God constantly fulfilled many other promises and encouraged them to wait for the day when God would keep the most important promise- sending the Savior.

Then, finally, God kept the most important promise of all promises. God sent the Savior, Christ to this world. From the moment of his birth to the moment of his death, the Savior fulfilled all the promises of God. The way of His birth-Virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23), His birth place-Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6), born as a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Matthew 1:1-16), lived in Nazareth (Judges 13:7; Matthew 2:23), suffered and died on the cross (Isaiah 53:1-12; 1 Cor. 15:3), rose again from the dead (Psalm 16:8-11; 1 Cor. 15:4)- all these things were done to fulfill God's promises.

The key promise that God accomplished through Christ was to save men from their sins and death.

Mankind's greatest problem is not a lack of education, insufficient technology, poverty, or lack of military power, but forgiveness of sin! If our greatest need had been knowledge, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent an economist. If our greatest need had been military, God would have sent a soldier. But, our greatest need was forgiveness of sins, and, therefore, God sent a Savior!

Through the birth of the Savior, the Christ, God has kept His promise to forgive us of all our sins and guarantees that He will keep all other promises for us. That is why the news of Christ's birth is good news of great joy.

We can find solutions for all our complicated problems in our lives through God's promise in Jesus.

You may face a world that is all messed up. But you can put it back together when you focus not on the messed up world but on Jesus through whom God keeps all his promises.

Focus on God's faithfulness in Jesus. Claim all God's promises through Jesus.

News of victory

Where there is victory there is joy. Through the birth of the Savior, God has brought us the greatest victory. It is the victory over the Devil. The most destructive, powerful and dangerous enemy of all mankind is not terrorists, or criminals, or sickness. It is the Devil. God sent His Son Jesus to this world to defeat the archenemy of mankind, the Devil. 1 John 3:8 ...*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

When there is a battle against a powerful enemy, there are always sacrifices. Thousands of young American soldiers have sacrificed their lives to fight against worldwide terrorism since the tragic event of 9/11. To win the battle against the Devil, God also sacrificed more than we can ever imagine. God sacrificed His own Son. Jesus has won the battle against the Devil not by sacrificing anything or anybody but by sacrificing Himself.

Also where there is a battle, there is fighting. In large battles, there is often violent fighting and lots of powerful weapons are used. However, Jesus has never used physical weapons to win the war. He is not a violent king. He is the King of peace (Isaiah 9:6). He won the battle through the way of peace. He does not quarrel or cry out and no one will hear his voice in the street (Matthew 12:19). He does not break a bruised reed. He does not snuff out a smoldering wick (Matthew 12:20). He is the King of gentleness. He won the battle against the Devil through spiritual authority and through the power of His own blood.

Jesus also fought the power of death which no man can ever conquer, and won over death through His resurrection. He actually rose from the dead after He died and was buried. 1 Corinthians 15:55-56 says, *Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And through that victory, He gives new life and new hope to all people who are crushed by the dark powers that come from the Devil, and from the power of death. There are countless examples of how people have gained new life and new hope through the victory of Christ.

Video clip – John Schlitt’s testimony

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQYNaGRFdJc>

If you want to overcome all the dark powers in your life, let Jesus, the prince of peace, rule your heart, let him be the King of your life.

News of the indescribable gift

The reason why the news of Christ’s birth is the good news of great joy is because Christ’s victory is a gift for all people.

In this world, when there is victory for some, there is defeat for others. While the victors are shouting with joy, the defeated have to weep in despair. There may be good news for the rich that will not be good news for the poor. So, there is no good news for all the people in this world. However, the news of victory in Christ is for all people (Matthew 28:19-20; Galatians 3:26-29).

That is exactly what God proved by delivering the good news of Jesus’ birth to shepherds. On the day of Christ’s birth, God sent an

angel to invite shepherds to come and meet the Christ, before He invited anybody else.

In those days shepherds were lowly people, poor and despised people. Their honesty and integrity was so questionable that they were not even allowed to testify in a court of law. Shepherds were so far down on the list of social outcasts that the only people lower were lepers.

So by giving the news of Christ's birth to these shepherds and inviting them to the birth place of Christ first, God demonstrated that through Christ, God loves and accepts all people, and that His gift of salvation and victory in Christ is for all people. That is why, when they delivered the message of Christ's birth to the shepherds, the angels proclaimed: *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

God chose the shepherds because He wanted to show that His love is available to all. He does not show more respect to kings than He does to an ordinary person.

You may think; "If God is even aware that I exist, He probably doesn't have a very favorable opinion of me!" Deep down a lot of people may feel like that. But no matter how insignificant you may think you are, God knows you and you are important to Him. Jesus says in Matthew 10:29-31 *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

If you feel useless, insignificant, you need to hear God's special invitation gift for you this Christmas. God is saying to you today: "If I gave the gift of Christ to the ordinary, poor shepherds on the first Christmas night, I give it to you too. Come be a special guest

in celebrating my Son's birthday. Unto **you** a Savior has been born."

For a third year running, FORTUNE Magazine has named Hilcorp one of the "100 Best Companies to Work For." This year, they certainly proved themselves worthy by awarding each of their 1,380 employees a \$100,000 Christmas bonus. That's right—\$100,000 per employee, regardless of their position in the company! The bonuses allow the entire Hilcorp team to share in the company's success.

This is not the first time Hilcorp has offered extravagant bonuses (a few years ago it offered its employees the choice of a \$50,000 car or \$35,000 in cash), and no doubt it won't be the last. The recipients seem to be truly grateful. "It's just a true gift, and I think myself, along with everyone, is not going to give less than 100 percent each day," receptionist Amanda Thompson told Fox 4 News in Houston.

Hilcorp's generosity really is a "true gift." But what about the original Christmas bonus program?! Two thousand plus years ago, God presented Himself to all mankind as the truest of all true gifts. He came to live for us and to die for us so that He could offer us the bonus of all bonuses—eternal life, offered equally to each one, regardless of our position, rank, or status.

If the employees of Hilcorp can be so motivated by \$100,000 to give "100 percent each day" back to the company, how much more ought we give of ourselves 100 percent in service and gratitude to the One who gave it ALL for us! "*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*" (2 Corinthians 9:15). Just accept the indescribable gift. And the gift will be yours too!