

Luke 2:8-11 First Christmas Joy Falls OPC PM December 24, 2023

For many of our fellow citizens who sit in darkness, the Christmas story is all they know about Christianity.

They so often understand correctly the First Christmas fact of the birth of Jesus, but they fail to understand correctly the First Christmas message.

The mere fact that a baby was born on the first Christmas is not the entirety of the First Christmas message.

The first Christmas message is that this baby came in order to remove the joylessness and misery of sin, and to replace it with forgiveness and genuine rejoicing that nothing else can provide.

**The First Christmas caused great joy for the shepherds.**

### **1. Great fear. (v.8-9)**

Verses 1-7, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Meanwhile, nearby in verse 8, *“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.”* Verse 9, *“And an angel of the Lord appeared to them...”*

Notice that God’s angel did not come to the rulers. The angel did not appear to the Governor of the nation of Syria, nor did the angel appear to the Caesar of the Roman Empire.

The angel did not appear to the priests, to the scribes and Pharisees, but instead the angel appeared to the shepherds tending flocks on the night shift. James 2:5 says *“Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which [God] has promised to those who love [God]?”* God’s message was sent to the shepherds on the night Christ was born. The spiritual truth of God’s kingdom is often given to the common person, and not to the great and privileged people of the world.

The coming of Jesus brought great joy to the common working shepherds. One moment, there were just the regular sounds always heard while keeping guard over

sheep during the night. Quiet. The next moment, all of the sudden, it happened. Angel of the Lord was bright, holy, and visible to all of them. They had not seen the angel coming. The angel simply appeared and started speaking. Heavenly brightness flashed all around the angel!

Joy was their second reaction! What was their first reaction? GREAT FEAR.

(v.9) “*and an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear...*”

They went from GREAT FEAR to GREAT JOY. How? By knowing the One Who is coming. How did they know him? By faith. How? The angel told them!

## **2. Great joy. (v.10)**

(v.10) “*and the angel said to them, ‘Do not fear, for behold I bring good news to you (pl.) of great joy which will be for all the people...*”

Why did the angel appear on that first Christmas night? Angels always come with a message. The word angel means messenger. Okay, what message? What did the angels say? In verse 10, the angels brought good news. The news was that God was saving His people from their predicament of sin, misery, and certain death, and instead, God would meet all the needs of His people. Not only was God at work in salvation, but God was about to accomplish that work of salvation once and for all. God’s salvation was being offered through an actual son of Israel, a Jewish boy located that very night in the town of David.

## **3. Great Savior. (v.11)**

In the gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke, right here in verse 11 is the only time that Jesus is called our Savior! And yet the angel places great emphasis on it here. A Savior is born! The Savior became a man. What does this mean? That He understands our propensity to feel left out as unimportant. We are not the kings, queens, prime ministers and big wigs. We are common people who sometimes have to work the night shift. Do we have a Savior? Yes! Our Savior understands our fears

and our need for comfort, our need for good news, our need for joy. How does He understand us? Because our Savior was born to us. He took on humanity like ours. This makes Him our Savior who is capable of understanding us! SI - If you have two pianos in the same room, and a note is struck on one piano, the same note will gently respond on the other piano, though it was not touched by another piano player. That is called “sympathetic resonance.” Because Jesus took on human flesh, and he was born in a stable, Jesus resonates whenever we feel like a nobody, when we feel like the world’s night-shift shepherd. He knows our weakness. He knows our need for comfort, our need for good news, our need for the message of First Christmas joy. He sent the angel to say *“unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior.”*

In addition, the title Lord is now applied to our Jesus. That is not surprising, except that we should notice that so far in the Gospel of Luke from the start up until chapter 2:11, Luke has used the title already 20 times so far, to refer to the God of Israel Himself. The title Lord indicates that there is only one – not a plurality of lords, but The Lord. Two quick examples. Example #1. it was implied to Zechariah in Luke 1:16, *“Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.”* Example #2, it was hinted at when Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, in Luke 1:42-43, *“In a loud voice she exclaimed, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’”* NOW, the angel expressly stated in chapter 2:11, the good news is that the One who has been born to you is Christ the Lord. This was quite an announcement! The LORD God of Israel had arrived that very night as a baby boy! He is Himself God come in the flesh.

**Application:** The fact that this baby had come in order to remove the misery of fear and to replace it with joy, that is the First Christmas message.

SI - Very small children sometimes fear loud, noisy trucks. However, if that young child who used to fear loud noisy trucks, learned that his Daddy drives a loud,

noisy truck, everything changes! Whenever the truck came down the road closer and closer to the house, then the child's reaction changed from fear to joy - knowing Daddy was coming home? That child has gone from great fear to great joy at the coming of the truck.

Our fellow citizen fears the coming of God to end the world or else the coming of their own death causing them to meet God their maker. The angel said the First Christmas Message is not a message of fear for sinners. Why not? Because Jesus came to remove our sins. With our sins forgiven, we need not fear meeting God! This truth is found in so many of our Christmas carols....Tidings of comfort and joy. Joy to the world, the Lord is come, Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns. How great our joy, great our joy. Joy, joy, joy, joy, joy, joy.

Joy over what? Joy that the baby who arrived the First Christmas was the arrival of our Savior for our sins. We have a Savior now! Everything is going to be alright! We have no need to fear God's coming. First Christmas joy remains our joy forever. Fear not, we have good news of great joy. Joy, joy, joy!

Luke 2:15, *"when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.'" And they went in hasted and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. (v.20) And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, as it had been told them."* Joy, joy, joy!

What if your joy is gone? If your joy is gone, ask Jesus to replenish your joy. Hebrews 4:15, *"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* If your joy is gone, ask Jesus. He understands. He has some good news of great joy, for you.