

Christmas Message

Title: **“The Divine Announcement”**

Luke 2:8-14 ~ December 26, 2010

OBJECTIVE: *To help us realize the salvation that was announced to the shepherds.*

Announcements

- Welcome / guests
- AWANA Grand Prix – purchase cars (\$5.00) in courtyard – date: Feb. 12th - great outreach – helpers with workshop on Feb. 5th.
- Check bulletin for ministry details

Simple people are significant to God. vs. 8-9

(Ordinary people are important to God)

“...in the fields nearby...” – refers to the area surrounding Bethlehem.

The Shepherds of this time were socially outcast. They were not respected in the culture because their work was simple...basic. Shepherding didn't require education, literacy, or any skill or knowledge beyond some basics. Shepherds were not allowed to give testimony in a court of law because the popular opinion was that their intellect was so low, that they couldn't understand the legal process. Because of their work, they were ceremonially unclean for worship. And not only were they ceremonially unclean, but they were unclean! Have you ever been around sheep and smelled them? Imagine what shepherds smelled like! Have you ever asked yourself why God chose to give this great, history making announcement to a group of shepherds? So, why did God send an angel to tell shepherds the news about Messiah's birth?

My guess is because God loves to use the simple things of this world to mock the arrogance of man.

“...God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”

1 Cor. 1:27-29

Prideful believers

self-doubting believers

Are you fearful of God? vs. 8-9

One of the things I enjoy about camping is being out in the middle of nowhere – away from the city lights – away from the sounds of civilization – and being able to see the brilliance of the stars. The text says that the shepherds were “...keeping watch over their flocks at night.” They probably had a fire going to keep them warm, but it would have been dark out there.

All of a sudden, an angel appears!

Now, in a historical sense, God has been silent for about 400 years. From the time of Malachi, to the time of John the Baptizer’s conception, there had been no angels, no word from God. In fact, that time in history is referred to by many theologians as “The 400 Silent Years”. All of a sudden, God begins to move in a supernatural way as the time is now right for His plan of salvation (Gal. 4:4). The angel’s appearance would have been startling enough, but with the angel the “...glory of the Lord shone around them...”. Throughout Scripture, when God allows His glory to be seen, it instills fear. Not because God is a scary looking being, but because He is holy – and seeing His glory reveals our sinfulness.

In a sense, every one of us should be fearful of God when we are in the darkness of our sin. When God shows up and His glory shines into our soul – a correct response is to fear God’s holy presence.

Isaiah 6:5 “Woe to me!...I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, The LORD Almighty!”

When the angels appeared to Joseph and Mary, they were told “...do not be afraid”.

Only the fool sits calmly in God’s presence when no provision has been made for their sin.

The shepherd’s response of terror was normal – and correct.

But the angel assures them. He is not there to bring judgment, but he has “...good news of great joy...”. The word for “good news” is *euangelizō*, which is where our English word *evangelize* comes from.

The light from the angel(s) fulfill Zechariah’s prophecy (Luke 1:78-79 – Zechariah’s prophecy about heaven’s light shining on those living in darkness “...by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness...”) and the darkness of this night symbolizes the state of the human soul before Christ.

Darkness and sin is the state of man before the light of Christ (which is the truth of Christ) comes into their life.

“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them” Isaiah 9:2

“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” John 1:5

The good news of the angel - the news of Jesus’ birth - brings light to our dark world, but the light reveals the sin in our life. In the darkness of our sin, we don’t realize the true state of our life before God. But our sinfulness is now evident in

the light of Christ – which rightly produces fear in us. We realize how unworthy we are of God, of His love, of His approval, and of His presence. But when we hear the Gospel (“good news”), and that Jesus loves us and has died for our sins – that we need to place our faith in Him and His atoning work on the cross – then we can have great joy in His forgiveness and grace!

As John Newton wrote in the great hymn “Amazing Grace”:
“’Twas grace that caused my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.”

The Gospel is for everyone. vs. 10b-11

“...for all the people.” – vs. 10b – The Good News about Jesus’ birth (and His death, resurrection) is for all people. Not just the wealthy, not just the privileged, powerful, or popular people in society. Not just for the educated or the elites.

What’s the good news? Vs. 11- a “...Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.”

Three things are contained in this phrase that are vital for us to understand.

First, a Savior implies that someone or something needs to be saved. That’s what a Savior does...he saves! Since this “good news” is for “all the people”, we can see that this Savior is here to save humanity (Matt. 1:21). And the promised salvation that Jesus brings is not just for the Jewish people, not just the wealthy, not just the powerful or privileged, but He is here for everyone. Some might wonder what we need to be saved from. Scripture is clear...we need to be saved from our sin. Our sin separates us from God, and we are unable to save ourselves – so we need a Savior.

Second, the word “Christ” (*Christos*) is the Greek word for *anointed one* – which is the title for the Messiah. The

Messiah was the redeemer that the people of Israel had been longing to see for centuries. At the time of Moses (Deut. 18:15-19), God had promised that the Messiah would come, and in this announcement, we see the faithfulness of God. He always keeps His promises...His word is certain...what He says He will do, He does.

Third, we see the title “Lord”. In Greek, this word, *kurios*, can refer to God, but it can also refer to a boss, leader, master. However, as Luke uses this word in his writings, specifically, in this context, it clearly refers to the one true God. In vs. 9, Luke uses the same term “An angel of the Lord”, “...the glory of the Lord”. When he says “Christ the Lord”, he is making a clear statement that this baby born is the Savior, Messiah, and God Himself!

Seek out your Savior, Messiah, Lord. vs. 12

How many babies do you think were in Bethlehem at that time? I don't have any idea, but there were probably more than one. But this was a unique baby – not just in who this baby was and what He would do, but He was unique in where He was lying.

Being wrapped in cloths was not unusual, but placing your baby in a feeding trough was not normal.

This would have narrowed down their search considerably. After all, how many babies were born in a stable / barn that night, lying in a feeding trough?

If you are searching for God today, then you can relax and know that He is easy to find. God's salvation to us is not an intellectual puzzle that only a few can discover. His salvation is knowable to “all the people”. God desires that all people “...come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) However, repentance is not something God automatically gives to each person. It's up to you – today – to see your sin in light of God's holiness,

and to repent of it – to admit your sins to Him – to confess your sins to the Lord and believe that Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. As Jesus said in John 14:6, “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

If you want to find God, then you begin by looking in the manger – which leads us to the cross.

Christmas brings praise to God. vs. 13-14

Do you praise God for the gift of His Son!

Do you worship God for His willingness and eagerness to become flesh and dwell among us?

The heavens couldn't contain the angelic praise – and after the announcement to the shepherds, the “heavenly host appeared with the angel” to worship.

The peace of God can be yours this Christmas season. Not because of what was under the tree yesterday...not because of the food you probably enjoyed...but because of the salvation we can have – through God's grace – when we put our faith in Jesus and His work on the cross.

Application

I want you to understand the urgency of God's call to you for salvation. Sometimes, we can put things off that don't seem so urgent at the time...we might think that we'll get more serious about spiritual things later – when I'm older.

A sergeant was explaining to a group of soldiers about to make their first parachute jump what to do if their main chute did not open: “Snap back immediately into a tight body position. Then pull the rip cord of your reserve chute, and it will open, bringing you safely to the ground.”

A private nervously raised his hand. “What's your question, soldier?” the sergeant called out.

"Sergeant, if my main parachute doesn't open, how long do I have to pull my reserve?"

The sergeant looked directly into the young private's eyes and replied earnestly, "The rest of your life, soldier. The rest of your life." (*Reader's Digest*, [2/82].)

Admit your sins

Believe in Jesus - "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (*Acts 16:31*).

Choose to follow Him

Close in prayer