

# Luke Ch2v1-21 - Christmas Baptism

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[ 0 : 00 ] Luke's Gospel, Chapter 2.

We're going to read from that in just a minute. We've been hearing lots of bad news recently, haven't we?

We can't escape the bad news. Every time we turn on the news, the bad news of COVID. Well, this morning we want to think about some good news.

The good news of Christmas. And so we're going to read an account of the Christmas story. The Christmas story from the shepherd's perspective.

So let's read Chapter 2, Verse 1 to Verse 21. Follow along with me in your Bibles.

[ 1 : 11 ] Luke 2, Verse 1. In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

And everyone went to their own town to register. 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.

And 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.

[ 2 : 24 ] I bring you today good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Saviour 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. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.

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

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what they had been told about this child.

And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherd said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

[ 3 : 36 ] The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Well, we're going to look at three things this morning from this text. An amazing encounter, a joyful announcement, and a transformed life.

Three things. So here's the first one. An amazing encounter. Look at verse 8. Follow along with me in your Bibles.

Verse 8. There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their sheep at night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them.

[ 4 : 44 ] Now, I don't know about you, but I don't think that I've ever met an angel. And it's not every day that you hear in 6.1 News of angels appearing in the sky.

Could you imagine being out for a walk at night or maybe at home in your room and then all of a sudden this angel shows up? How would you feel if that was you?

Special? Excited? Shocked? Well, you see, you and I can read through this story and you can think, well, you know what?

I wish that was me because I would love to meet an angel. I wish an angel showed up at my door because, well, if an angel showed up, well, then for sure I would know that this Christmas account is true.

I mean, if an angel was there, it must be believable. That would be some story to be able to go back and tell your friends that an angel appeared.

[ 5 : 55 ] But when the angels came to the shepherds, they were, look at the end of verse 9, they were what? They were terrified.

You see, visiting angels is really not a normal experience. It's extraordinary. angels are God's servants and God's messengers.

So when an angel shows up, it means God has something really important to tell us. Angels appearing, well, that's incredible. That would be amazing.

But here's something even more amazing. It's their message. You see, God might not send you a personal angel today or tomorrow or next week, but God has made sure that the message from the angels has been kept for you.

You see, God wants us today to hear what the angels said to the shepherds because it's a message for you and I. That means we need to listen very carefully to what is being said.

[ 7 : 11 ] So first, an amazing encounter. Second, a joyful announcement. The message of the angels comes in in three things.

Well, at least that's how we're going to look at it. Three parts to the message of the angel. Here's the first one. It's good news.

Look at verse 10. The angel said to the shepherds, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

This wasn't just any news. This was good news. In other words, it was an announcement, a declaration that was going to cause real excitement and joy and happiness for not just shepherds, but for all the people, including you and I.

It's going to be life transforming. Think about this good news like this. We've all seen our Taoiseach Micheál Martin make his way down from Leinster House and he stands in front of the podium, doesn't need to address the nation just like I'm standing here now and he makes his declaration to the nation, an announcement.

[ 8 : 40 ] And most of the time it's bad news. News about COVID and further restrictions and out of the pubs and the restaurants by eight o'clock and all sorts of things like that.

But imagine on this occasion he walks down the steps, down the red carpet, he stands in front of the microphone to make his announcement, a declaration.

I bring you good news of great joy for all the people. COVID is no more. A pill has been found that kills COVID and heals you of COVID.

All you have to do is take it. Somebody has done all the scientific and medical work on your behalf, all you have to do is take it and everything will be right.

Wouldn't that be good news? Well that's what the angels have come to do. They are announcing good news. They're telling us all that something has been done for you.

[ 9 : 48 ] You don't have to do it. You just have to receive it. Something has been done for you and for me and it's good news.

Well what is it that has been done? Well, here's the second part of the message. It's all been done by a saving king.

Look at the announcement from the angel verse 11. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

Now Messiah is a title just like we have Taoiseach. That's a title. It's a special office. Well, Messiah is a title, a special office reserved for one person and one person alone.

God's son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Messiah really means God's promised saving king.

[ 10 : 55 ] God's promised saving king. God has sent to the world a saviour. The baby born to Mary and Joseph, Jesus Christ is God's saving king.

But what kind of saviour is he? What's he going to save us from? That's a really important question. Well, as we read on in Luke's gospel, and you can follow with me, have a look at chapter 5.

So just go on a couple of chapters to chapter 5 in your Bible. as we read into Luke's gospel, we discover what Jesus saves us from, because Jesus actually tells us.

We don't have to figure it out. He tells us. And here we get the answer, chapter 5. He's been talking to some religious leaders who've been very upset with Jesus because he's hanging around with so-called sinners, naughty people.

What's he doing with them? Well, he answers them. Verse 31, chapter 5, verse 31, Jesus said, it's not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill.

[12:07] I have not come to call the righteous, or I haven't come to call those who think they're good, but sinners to repentance.

Now, if you're sick, if you're not feeling well, you go to the doctor, you ring up your GP, don't you, and you get a bottle of medicine, a few pills, or whatever is needed to help you better, get better. You don't go to the doctor to announce that you're well. You don't ring up and make an appointment and say, hi doctor, great to see you, high five, I'm feeling really well today, I just wanted to come and tell you that I've never felt better.

that would be a bit ridiculous, wouldn't it? Well, in the same way, we don't go to Jesus to tell Jesus, Jesus, I'm doing great, I'm a really good person, I've done brilliant things this week, I'm spiritually pure.

no, we run to Jesus because we're sinners, we're all spiritually sick, and the only person who's going to be able to heal us from our sin is the Lord Jesus.

[13:33] You see, the Bible tells us very clearly that we've all been born sinners. We live in the rebel county, County Cork.

But we're all rebels, not because we live in Cork, but because of our birth. That means we've replaced God with self. God's the creator of the universe.

He's the centre of the universe. He owns everything. He's in the charge of everything. He's the boss of everything. He's in the centre. But we've all come along and we've pushed him out and we've put ourselves in the centre.

rather than God be king of our life, I'm king of my life. And I'm going to decide what is right or wrong and I'm going to decide how I should live.

The problem with that is all of us are fighting for the centre. We all want to be king. We all want to be in the middle.

[14:39] It means we're all in conflict with God. It means we're his enemies. And if we're his enemies, we can't live in God's good and eternal kingdom.

You see, God has promised that one day, yes, Jesus has come once, that's what we celebrate at Christmas, but Jesus is going to come again in the future. We don't know when, but when he comes again, he's going to sort out all the trouble and all the suffering is going to end and all the evil is going to end, all the bad things that we read about and see and experience in our life will all be gone.

But if we're in conflict with God, if we're his enemies, we can't share in that eternal kingdom.

I'd love to be able to stand and tell you and say, you know what, it's going to be okay, it's just going to work out fine, and we'll all be part of the kingdom. If we're still in conflict, still fighting for center place, pushing God off his throne, we can't share in it.

So God sent his son, the saving king, to make us his friends, so that we can. How does he do that?

[16:11] Well, here's the third part of the message. Peace. Listen again to what the angel said. Let's go back to chapter 2 and verse 13.

This is what the angels said. Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly hosts appeared with the angel. That is, there were hundreds of other angels joined that one angel in the sky and they all started singing, glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.

Peace. We've been promised peace. Now that peace doesn't mean a suffering free life, a life where we'll be free from troubles and no more bad things will ever happen to us ever again.

No, what it means is peace with God. It means to be reconciled, to be put back again into a right relationship.

Instead of being his enemy, facing punishment and being shut out of his presence, we receive his peace. We become his friends.

[ 17 : 34 ] Let me explain how we can all know and experience that peace. In a moment, Asia is going to get baptised. That's why we have this large tub of water at the front.

And two actions are involved in baptism, aren't they? There's the going down into the water and then the coming up out of the water.

It's symbolic. That means it represents something. It's a picture of the good news. It's a picture of the death of Jesus going down into the water and it's a picture of the resurrection of Jesus coming up out of the water.

You see, when Jesus died, his death on the cross, he was taking my sin and your sin, all the things that we've done wrong, all our rebellion, all that conflict, is all taken by Jesus.

He's taking the punishment you and I deserve. And when Jesus rose again from the grave, he's giving us new life. He's making peace with us so that we can be friends with God.

[ 18 : 53 ] It's as if he reaches out his hand, a handshake of peace. And when Asia gets baptized, what she's saying is, hands up, I'm a sinner, I'm trusting that Jesus died for me.

I've done bad things, I've done wrong things, but his death is a death for me. Isn't that right, Asia? And Asia, when she gets baptized, is saying, I need new life.

I'm trusting that when Jesus rose again, he rose again for me. His life is my new life.

I'm no longer his enemy, but his friend. I no longer fear punishment, but I now can enjoy peace with God.

It's like Asia has kind of taken center place because that's what we all do. We take center place, we push God out, and in repentance we turn and say, no, God's the center, and I live to serve him, and I want to follow him all my life.

[ 20 : 22 ] You see, the angels came to announce good news, the good news of a savior who makes peace with God for us. That's brilliant.

So how did the shepherds respond? respond? Well, we've looked at an amazing encounter, we've looked at a joyful announcement, and then last, a transformed life.

Three things we're just going to look at very briefly to show us what we can learn from the shepherds about how you and I can respond to the angels announcement.

Because this is good news, not just for the shepherds, but for everyone. Here's the first thing, to receive God's grace.

I wonder, did you take note of who the angels went to? Who did the angels go to? We know the answer, don't we? To the shepherds.

[ 21 : 29 ] Now, shepherds in those days were very unimportant people. Shepherds today are really important people because they provide us with lovely legs of juicy roast lamb.

Mmm, my favourite. But shepherds in those days weren't very important people. In fact, they were considered the lowest of the low. We're told in verse 8 that they lived out in the fields.

They had to make their own shelter, get their own food, their own water. In fact, when people were walking by, when they were journeying from one place to another, shepherds would rob other people because they didn't have much.

Nobody liked shepherds. They were the most unimportant, despised people that you could find. But amazingly, God chose the shepherds to be the very first people in the whole world to hear the good news from the angels.

How amazing is that? God chose the lowest of the low. He didn't go running to the political leaders, the ones that we read about in chapter 2, verse 1, Caesar, Augustus, Quirinius, all these political, important people.

[ 22 : 50 ] God didn't send angels to them. He didn't send angels to the self-important people. He goes to rotten thieving sinners.

He goes to shepherds to announce the news of Jesus' birth. You see, that's God's amazing grace.

He doesn't come to us and say, I want you to sort your life out, then you can come to me. He doesn't say, promise me that you'll do better and that you'll try harder and then I'll help you.

God doesn't say, make a commitment to never ever fail again and then I'm going to save you. No, God has sent his son to invite sinners, people like you and me.

He comes to seek and save the lost. He comes to people who know they need help, people who know they need a saviour, people who know they're not good enough, people like Asia, people like

me and people like you.

[ 24 : 13 ] Well, receive grace. Here's the second response, check it out. After hearing the good news, the shepherds, look at verse 15, when they heard this, they said, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about.

Let's go check it out. Let's go see if this is true. We've heard a message, maybe it's fake news, maybe it's all made up. Let's go and find out.

So, verse 16, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. And when they'd seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told about this child.

You see, they went to find out, to check out, if what they'd heard was true. And we're hearing the same message today.

And you're maybe sitting here thinking, I'm not quite sure I believe this. It's a nice story, but I don't know if it's true. Well, check it out.

[ 25 : 25 ] How do you check it out? Read Luke's Gospel. Luke was one who went and interviewed people and searched for all the evidence and he got all the stories together, he got all the witnesses together, and then he wrote down Luke's Gospel so that we could know the truth.

Read it for yourself. Check out if the story is true. The shepherds did, and they discovered something amazing.

They checked it out, and they came to worship him. look at verse 20. The shepherds returned, back to where they had come from, back to their fields, glorifying and praising God for the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

You know when you glorify someone, or you praise someone, what you're doing is you're worshipping them.

You're saying what they have done, if somebody scores a great goal or somebody achieves something really good, you clap and applaud and you jump up and down and go, yes, brilliant, fantastic.

[ 26 : 45 ] You're giving them praise, you're giving them your worship. You see, the shepherds had come to understand what this baby means.

He's not just an ordinary baby, he is the saviour of the world. Therefore, he deserves our worship. He deserves my whole life. Do you remember how the shepherds responded when they saw the angel? Remember when the angel appeared?

Do you remember their response? They were terrified. Why were they terrified? well, the shepherds knew exactly what kind of life they'd lived.

They weren't the most reputable people around. They were downright dirty sinners. Now God had appeared with an angel in the sky, with a message.

[ 27 : 45 ] That could only mean one thing. We're doomed. God's coming to strike us down. We're lost. But no.

What did the angel say? Don't be afraid. No, you're not going to get struck down. God hasn't come to wipe you out.

God has come to save you. He's come to give his life for you. That's why he deserves our worship. It means to make Jesus the most important person to you.

It's to make him the greatest treasure in your whole life. It's saying that if I don't have Jesus in my life, I'm lost forever.

I'm dead. The shepherds worshipped him. They gave their life to Jesus. Asia has given her life to Jesus.

[ 28 : 52 ] she has come to worship Jesus because of what he has done for her. The question is to you, do you worship Jesus?

Have you given your life to him? Most important thing we could ever do. And maybe you're here and you're thinking, yeah, I've done that. Well, let me ask, have you been baptized? as a demonstration of your love and trust in the Lord Jesus. Maybe that's something you need to be thinking about.

Worship him. Give your life to him. He's your savior. Let's pray. Amen. Father, we're amazed at such good news.

We all were just desperate to hear good news and we've just listened to it. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being the perfect, full, and sufficient savior of our life.

[ 30 : 14 ] Help us to trust you. help us that we might worship you with our life. Thank you for the work you've done in Asia's life.

Thank you for the work you can do in our life too. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Well, before we baptize, we're going to sing.

We're going to sing about what the angels announced. Hark, Thank you.