

Turning Surprises Into Praise

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Preacher: Jerry Holdman

[0 : 00] Music Music Music Music Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today.

My name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor here at First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. As always, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

Hey, today is going to be a little different than normal. You're not going to have to watch me preach today. We are blessed to have one of our elders, a man named Jerry Holdman.

Jerry is a hero of mine. I've admired Jerry for many years. Jerry was in ministry longer than I've been alive and now is retired from full-time ministry and a wonderful elder here at FCC.

We are so thankful for him and his wife, Jenny, and just their heart to love God with everything they are. So I hope today as he preaches this Christmas message that you will enjoy what God is going to bring through a wonderful man like Jerry.

[1 : 34] Hello, I'm Jerry Holdman. I'm a member of the First Christian Church here in Greensburg. And I'm preaching today. And so as I start, I want to say this.

Boo! Did I scare you? Well, I surprise you probably a little bit because I want to just talk for a while about how we are surprised about many things that happen in the Scriptures and in life.

And we experience these things all the time. I know preachers sometimes get kind of famous because they not only preach loud, but they preach and sometimes they shout.

Sometimes they holler. Sometimes they pound the pulpit. Sometimes they stomp their feet. And that's to wake people up, I guess.

No, it's really to get attention because they want to emphasize a point a little bit better. And I've seen this happen with coaches, with football teams especially, how the player would make a mistake and he'd sit him down on the bench and the coach would get over there and get right in his face and yell.

[2 : 51] And that's one of those things that hopefully gets the attention and the player does better from that. I know that's what it's for. But I like sometimes coming up behind my wife when she's not expecting me.

She's not in there. I'll go like I just did to you. I'll just say boo. I don't have to say it very loud, but she jumps. And so we have a good laugh about that.

Well, do you like surprises? We get surprises all the time. And some prizes are good, things we enjoy, things we're glad, and we celebrate them.

And other times there are surprises that happen that we were shocked. We never thought that would ever happen. We get kinds of news. And our text here is in Luke 2, 8 through 20.

And it is of the title of my message, Turning Surprises into Praise. Because you're familiar with the story of Joseph and Mary whenever they traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

[4 : 00] They had to go take part of the census, as Caesar said they had to do. And they had to be registered so they could be taxed. And Mary happened to be very great with child.

She was very pregnant. And they didn't have a very easy time of that trip. We can be sure of that. We're not sure how she went, but it may have been riding on a donkey, as that's what tradition tries to show anyway.

But they finally made it to Bethlehem. And finally they could come there and find a room and get some rest and take care of Mary to deliver her baby.

But there was no room for them. And so they had to find someplace else. And according to tradition, they found a cave.

And the cave had animals in it. And there was also a place to lay the baby. It was in a manger. What's called a manger is a feeding trough for animals.

[5 : 02] You're probably pretty much aware of that. But the baby was born. And so the first thing that happened, she laid the baby in the manger.

And the scriptures say in Luke chapter 2 and verse 8, there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And they were terrified. Now I always learned that in the King James Version where it says they were sore afraid.

But as I've checked this up, the word, it means they were terrified. And one translation says they were terror stricken, seized with fear. They were terribly frightened. I mean, they were scared to death.

Here it was dark out there. The sheep were being taken care of in the fields. And they were sleeping and roaming around, I suppose. But the angels came.

[6 : 04] And it says the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And so they were scared, scared out of their socks. Well, the angel said, just a minute.

He said, I'm bringing you some good news of great joy. Well, that wasn't, I'm sure that wasn't their first reaction. But they had, they later on did have that great joy.

But the long anticipated Messiah. And then the angel announced that, that he had been born. And he would, they would find him lying in a manger.

And I mean, the usual reaction when people had a message from an angel was just like these shepherds. I mean, when Zachariah had the message, he says he, it says he was frightened.

Mary was troubled. And down through the scriptures, whenever angels appeared to people, oftentimes they were, they were very disturbed about that. That was a normal reaction to it.

[7 : 04] And I think even whenever Jesus, later on with his disciples, there were several instances, whenever things happened that scared the disciples, they were frightened.

Like when they were out on the, on the sea of Galilee, and the storm came up and they thought they were going to drown. Jesus was asleep in the boat, but he woke up and said, peace be still.

And so they found that out. Well, the apostles feared many times. And, and I think how it is with you and me, we have situations in our lives that make us very disturbed.

We get fearful. We get letters. We don't want to hear. We get things that happen and we, we can't help ourselves. And we get surprised and we're troubled. But other times people plan parties for us and they want to keep making a surprise party.

And so we will enjoy something for us to enjoy. Well, you know, there's many scriptures in the Bible that stress how we need to have hope and we need to have faith.

[8 : 08] And that's what we can rely upon. That God wants us to trust him. In fact, President Roosevelt, back in what they used to call the dirty thirties when they had the depression, he had fireside chats at certain times over national radio.

And then those fireside chats, he'd try to let people know things were looking better and try to be encouraged. And he coined a phrase. I don't know if he made it up or if he, if he found it someplace, but he said, we have nothing to fear, but fear itself.

Oh, I like that. Nothing to fear, but fear itself. That was a needed slogan. And at that time, well, secondly, there was a gospel surprise that happened here in this scripture in verses 10 and 11.

The, the, they saw it, heard what the angel said. And then it says, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, but the angel said, do not be afraid.

And they said, I bring you news of joy and bring it to Christ. The Lord is being born. And this will be a sign to you. You'll find him wrapped in cloths lying in a manger. Suddenly the great host of the angels appeared and said, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men on whom his favor rests.

[9 : 36] The gospel surprise was a good one. It was something that they needed to hear. And so they had the great news of joy. And later on, as Jesus grew up and as he lived his life and as he had his ministry, he filled the, the, the, the restrictions.

He filled the rules that would govern the Messiah. They're called prophecies. In the old Testament, there are over 300 prophecies about the Messiah, what he would be like, what he would do and all the things that, and, and every one of them, Jesus fulfilled.

In fact, whenever he was killed, whenever he was crucified on that, and all the events that surrounded that, there was over a hundred prophecies made that he fulfilled.

So we know exactly who the Messiah is because he fulfilled those prophecies. Well, there's also typology in the old Testament. They had sacrifices.

They had, they had laws that they had to keep. They had restrictions. And all of those pointed to the Messiah, pointed to the Christ who was to come.

[10 : 50] And so that's the way it is. God made promises for salvation for whosoever will. It's possible for whosoever will. You know, everybody is interested in news.

Unfortunately, most of the news that we hear is bad. It's bad news. I mean, that's what makes it news.

I mean, I've, I've read of people who've tried to start newspapers and they're tired of bad news. So they say, this is, we're only going to have good news on our paper. And the paper, after a few copies, after a couple of months, folds up because nobody buys a paper.

People want to hear news, crimes, scandals, disasters, starving people, wars, tragedies, storms, just on and on. But we have the good news, which is the gospel.

You've heard the word gospel. That's what the word gospel means. Good news. And it's defined very strictly too in the Bible. The death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 58] That's the good news. That's the whole good news, folks. And we need to understand that. Well, ever since this message and the Messiah's earthly work of what he did, we are covered with good, positive news.

You know, I think it's interesting that, I don't know these percentages, but it seems like 95% of the news stories we hear are bad news.

Something bad's happened. And only 5% is some of the good things that happened. Well, we need to realize that God made this world good.

And I use that percentage because it seems like when you hear these things, the bad news overwhelms the good news, the bad news overwhelms the good so much. But we have the good news.

That's what Jesus did when he came. You know, I've received phone calls at 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock in the morning. And every time I would get, the phone would start ringing.

[13 : 02] I'd jump out of bed, head for the room where the phone was. That was before cell phones. And so I'd run in there and grab the phone and pick it up. Hello. And I, and I was, I was listening.

My heart was thumping and pounding. And a couple of times I even had people call me in the middle of the night and give me some good news. But I didn't know it was good news until I answered the phone.

So my heart was still pounding for about 10 minutes after I got the news. Well, the best news for all people is here in verse 10.

When it says, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people, all the people.

The angel restricts to some less somewhat. It says for all the people. That means it's the complete forgiveness of sin. It's absolutely total for all who will, for whosoever will.

[14 : 04] In John 3, 16, you probably learned that verse when you were a kid. It's still true. God so loved the world. He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

Oh, beautiful folks. They call that the gospel in a nutshell. It's great. But I think of another one, Romans 6, 6, it gets even more personal.

When it says, in him, the body of sin rendered powerless. Oh, the sin problem. That's the sin problem that we have, that Jesus came to take care of.

And he did so masterfully when he died on the cross. Well, thirdly, there's a sign and overflow of the surprise that these people had. These shepherds.

Verses 12 through 14, they were told about the manger. And, and then there was praising of God going on. It says, suddenly a vast army of the heavenly hosts of God's army appeared.

[15 : 11] And they, of the angel. And they were praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest. And on earth, peace, goodwill to men, men of goodwill.

You know, that's, it's interesting the way that's phrased. Because some people don't have very much goodwill. They have to be converted to have some goodwill. But he says, goodwill, peace on earth.

He is bringing peace. And folks, he's still the Prince of Peace. But it has to be people who want that peace. And unfortunately, we don't have too many people around that are like that.

Well, the results, finally, the results of the surprise, verses 15 through 20, it tells the reaction of the shepherds. It was not negative. They didn't say, well, you're disturbing my sleep, or I got to take care of these sheep.

No, they had a responsible job. But still, whenever the angels left, they just looked at each other. And it seems like they all said at the same time, let's go.

[16 : 18] Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that's happened. Let's go see this, this thing. There's Christ the Lord, who's the baby in a manger.

So they went, and they found the Savior. I think it's interesting, that the angels didn't say, well, you better go and find, let's see, we went to all the trouble of coming here, so you better go and find that baby.

They didn't say go, but they just said, you will find him. They knew that was something so momentous, this was something so important, nothing was going to stand in their way, of going to see the promised Messiah, who had finally arrived on this planet, from heaven.

Well, they found him. They couldn't keep the news to themselves, so they spread the news, all that they were told about this child. And, it says, that's what they did.

They spread the word, and they returned glory, and praising God, for all the things, that they had heard, and seen. Their surprise, of terror, changed, into a surprise, of praise.

[17 : 29] Praise, and honor, and glory to God, just like the angels, were doing. And so, they did that very same thing. And as I close, I want to say, today, you, me, all of us, we are standing, in the shoes, of the shepherds.

We're standing, in the shoes, of the shepherds. Oh, we don't see, the Messiah, in real life. But we see him, in the solid truth, of the word of God.

We see him there. And we see him, yes, he was a baby. He grew, he became a child. He became a teenager. He became a man. He worked. In fact, as far as we can understand, he didn't, he worked around the carpenter shop, for a long time.

And his last three years, were used, in ministry. In going out, preaching, and telling the good news, and preparing people, for the church, for the salvation, to come.

And so, we find ourselves, with these shepherds, and he, God has an expectation, for us. He doesn't mention it, right here in this scripture, but over in Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31, through 46, he has, about, 12 verses there, 14 verses, I think it is, where he mentions, some things, about the judgment, the final judgment, when the Lord, comes again.

[19 : 09] And he says, the people are going to be, divided into two groups, sheep on one side, goats on the others. The sheep, are the ones, who are saved, the goats, are the ones, that are lost. And he's going to tell them, what made them, in that condition.

And what's interesting to me, he repeats, what made them, in those conditions, four times. Four times, positively, and negatively. He talks about, those who fed the hungry, those who helped, those who were thirsty, those who helped, those who were strangers, they helped those, who were naked, they helped those, who needed encouragement, those who were in prison.

Four times, that's repeated, in just those few verses. To the sheep, you did that thing, for people. To the goats, you didn't do that thing, for people.

The saved, and the lost. Folks, we have practical things, that God expects us to do. And he gives us, a great commission, to take the good news, the gospel, to all the creation.

He said, go into all the world, and preach the gospel, to every creature, teach them, and baptize them, and teach them some more. And lo, I'm with you always, to the very end of the world.

[20 : 25] That's the promise we have. That's the expectation, that God has, for every Christian. And Jesus, yes, we remember him, this time of year, as a baby.

And babies are cute. And I'm sure, Jesus was just as cute, as any. But he didn't keep, that cuteness. He became our savior, when he was crucified, to the cross, and shed his blood, to take away our sins.

So that we might have, the opportunity, to believe in him, to repent of our sins, to confess him, before people, to lie, go into the watery grave, of baptism, and come out.

A brand new creature, redeemed, saved, looking forward, to that time, when he does return. God bless you. Well, thank you, Jerry, very much, for preaching God's word, to us today, and just taking us deeper.

I truly do appreciate it. Today, if you have heard this message, and God has kind of, prompted your heart, and maybe you'd like, to respond to that, here's a way, you can reach out to us.

[21 : 39] Maybe you have, some faith questions, maybe you want to talk about, what it means, to truly follow Jesus, or maybe discuss some questions, about the church. Once again, we are First Christian Church, of Greensburg, Indiana, and so here's how, you can reach out to us.

You can go, and call, our church office, at 812-663-8488, that's 663-8488, or, you can email me, at, ray, at, fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, thank you so much, for tuning in today. God bless you, and have a great week.