

The arrival of the King who is Good News of great joy

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[0 : 00] and Meghan Markle, you know, they're the latest thing these days. They're expecting their first child, just in case you didn't know that. Although my wife had to tell me, but anyway, they're expecting their first child.

When he or she is born, can you imagine them placing this child in the bowl of the Queen's corgis? An animal bowl. It's unthinkable, isn't it?

And yet, Jesus was. Why? Well, because Jesus' humble birth points us to what sort of king he's going to be, a humble king, who will put his people before himself.

Imagine if our leaders did that. How nice would that be? In fact, for Jesus, he is so humble that he would later humble himself to die a horrific death on a cross in order to save his people.

And so Luke's description here is not only history, but I think the way he describes it subtly announces who Jesus is. He is a humble saviour king.

[1 : 06] And Luke's subtle announcement really paves the way for the angel's announcement, which is far from subtle. So we're at point three in your outlines and paragraph three in your readings.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 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. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. For today in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you.

He is the Christ, the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Here is the angel's announcement, and it is not subtle, is it?

I mean, the glory of the Lord shone around all these shepherds like a massive search and rescue light. No wonder they were terrified. But the announcement the angel has for them is good news.

[2 : 11] There's a cause for great joy. So what is it? Well, verse 11, For or because a saviour has been born to you, or for you.

What's more, this saviour is the promised king. Notice again, from the town of David. He is the Christ, which means the king, the anointed one.

In other words, what Luke announced subtly in the previous paragraph, the angel announces loudly in this third paragraph, that this baby Jesus is the saviour king.

And this is good news of great joy for all the people. I saw this picture by one couple who are announcing their pregnancy. It's on the next slide.

It's a bit mean, really, the poor sick wife in the background. But she gets her own back on the next slide. It's twins. And so now he feels sick.

[3 : 15] Now, usually these kinds of announcements are good news of great joy for the couple and their immediate family and friends. But the announcement of Jesus' birth is good news of great joy for all of God's people.

Why? Well, because their saviour had arrived. He is the one they were waiting for, the promised king who would save them. But from what?

The Jews originally thought that this king would save them from the foreign rulers like Caesar, Augustus and the Romans and give them peace horizontally, you know, between people.

But Jesus was born to save them from the real problem that put them under the foreign rule in the first place. That is, their rebellion or sin against God.

He came to give them a vertical peace between God and them first. Because it's only when you've got peace with God that you can find you have peace, true peace with one another.

[4 : 16] And this problem of theirs, this rebellion against God, this sin against God, unfortunately it's not just their problem. It's ours too.

And our sin has made us actually enemies with God. I remember one time walking home from school. I was about eight years old. It was my first week of walking home from school.

And I walked past some older boys from the school. And one of them was trying to show off. He ran up to me and spat a big Lottice of Liva in my face and pushed me over to show how tough he was. I was very young at the time. And so I just ran home and told my parents. But I can still remember even now how it felt. It was demeaning, humiliating.

And it clearly meant that they chose to be my enemy. I didn't choose it, but their actions chose it for them. But you see, by ignoring God who made us, by not listening to his word because it's hard to accept or politically incorrect, or by not always loving God or loving others, we've not literally but effectively spat in his face.

[5 : 34] We've not treated him as God. We've demeaned him, not listened to him, dishonored him. And that means we have made ourselves, we have chosen to be God's enemies.

And as his enemies, we have no right to eternal life. That comes with God. But if we choose to be enemies with God, then all that's left is eternal judgment. I mean, that kid who spat in my face, he deserved judgment.

How much more so do you think we do who is effectively spat in God's face? And yet, God, who is great in mercy and love, chose to send his son to be our saviour, king.

Born that very first Christmas, as the kids sang a moment ago, to save us from our sin. For he grew up and died on the cross, and at the cross he took all of God's right anger, all of our judgment.

He took it all upon himself, so that we can be saved from it. And instead, we can now have peace with God. Not enemies, but have real peace, relational peace.

[6 : 52] As his children, reconciled to God. As we'll sing after the sermon this morning, at peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners, what is it?

Reconciled. Peace. And with this peace comes all the other things that we've seen during our Advent series for our regulars. Things like knowing God as our Heavenly Father, who will never leave us nor forsake us.

No longer needing to fear failure or even fear death. Because instead, we have the guarantee of life, eternal. To rule with Christ in a new creation.

This is extraordinary generosity of God, when you think about it. That while we deserve judgment for spitting in his face, he rather chose to send his Son to take our judgment in our place.

No wonder the heavens break open to praise God. Do you see the fourth paragraph there? The short one, verse 13 and 14. Suddenly, a great company of heavenly hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, because of what God's done, glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests.

[8 : 13] You see, heaven breaks open and a myriad of angels praise God because of what he has done in sending a Savior King. So that we can have peace, a first of all vertical peace with God.

But only, it says, on those whom God's favor rests. So who are those on whom God's favor rests? Well, as the rest of Luke's gospel makes clear, it is those who believe in Jesus as their own Savior King. This is the only way to receive God's favor and enjoy God's peace.

Otherwise, we remain his enemies. And so the first question I need to ask you this morning is, do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe he was born to be your Savior and King?

That's what he's announced to be. Because if you don't, then you won't have true peace with God. And if you don't at the moment, but would like to trust in Jesus, then I'd love to talk to you after the service this morning, if you're able to.

[9 : 24] But for us who do believe in Jesus, then three points of application. The first is, is this still good news that causes great joy for us?

Even more so than perhaps an extra week's annual leave, as good as that would be? I'm the senior minister here now, and I seem to have less annual leave. If it would be really good, anyway.

Yeah, oh, yeah. Even, or what about a present you've always wanted, or winning an overseas holiday? Is this news of Jesus still better than that?

There's a famous episode of an Oprah Winfrey show, where she gave every person in the audience a car. This is the reaction on the next slide. Cue the drum roll. All right, open your boxes. Every person who opens a box with a key gets a car. Everybody gets a car.

[10:28] It's now become a saying in our society. Do you believe it? Now, it was clearly good news, which created great joy, didn't it? Or perhaps hysteria. But can you imagine that?

Actually, I was in here this morning, and if you'd all like to check under your seats. Though, for a split second, did you think, ooh?

Sometimes I wonder whether we can relate more to the joy of material things, and perhaps even prefer it, than the joy of our Saviour King. Because we're so used to hearing about Him, and forgetting the enormity of what He's done for us.

Taking all our judgment in our place. Getting us eternal life. I mean, it's hard to put a figure on that. You see, we need to keep remembering the enormity of what Christ has done for us.

Then we won't trade the joy of a car that will break down and rust out for the joy of a Saviour King who gives us life eternal. Instead, He will continue to be great news that brings great joy for us.

[11:45] As so much so that, secondly, we will want to keep serving Him as our King. I remember that's who He is. Born in the town of David. Do you remember? He is Christ, the King, the Lord.

And so we are to serve Him joyfully as our King, our Lord. And that's what we will sing as our last carol today. With the carol, O Come All Ye Faithful.

And the chorus is, Come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord. And when it says, Come, let us adore Him, it doesn't mean, Oh, isn't baby Jesus adorable?

No, the adore means, I'm in awe that you would die for me, so I want to serve you. In other words, the good news of Christ ought to encourage us to keep serving Him as the Christ, the King.

And thirdly, if we continue to regard Jesus as good news of great joy, then we will continue to look for opportunities to speak of Him and to praise God for Him.

[12:54] I mean, that's exactly what those ordinary shepherds did, which is kind of their announcement. I won't spend a lot of time on this at all, but just have a look at the last paragraph in your readings and see what the shepherds do.

So the last paragraph there, 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.

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

And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Mary treasured up these things and pondered them in her heart. But the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

These shepherds are not gifted apostles or evangelists. They are ordinary working class people. But this Jesus, this Saviour King was such good news of great joy that they spread the word about Him and praised God for Him.

[14:12] I don't know what announcement you'll hear this Christmas and whether it will be good news of great joy for you, but my prayer is that the birth of Jesus as our Saviour King will continue to be good news to your ears and great joy to your hearts.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank you so much for your love towards us, which gave your Son for us to be our Saviour and our King.

We pray, our Heavenly Father, that this announcement made that very first Christmas would continue to be good news to our ears and bring great joy to our hearts, not just this Christmas, but for the years ahead.

We pray it all in Jesus' name. Amen.