

Good News of a Great Joy: Glory to God

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[0 : 0 0] 2 verse 10 we read and the angel said to them to the shepherds fear not for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people for unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord the news of royal birth invariably it's all splashed around around the world the media right at the forefront weeks even months before the the birth there's an anticipation that reaches a crescendo of excitement and then the moment comes and there's all the scramble of the paparazzi to get the first pictures of the newborn son we saw that earlier this year in the birth of get this right Archie Harrison Mountbatten Windsor the frenzy you'll remember it the frenzy the attention the all the photos all the the comments all the attention it was it was worldwide still there still is that interest in royalty even in the so-called progressive anti-authoritarian 21st century the privilege of of royalty gives a special status of attention to a royal birth but 2000 years ago there was no media frenzy there was no worldwide acclaim there was no overwhelming attention given to to that royal birth that that the birth of the royal son the son of majesty the Lord Jesus when he was born in Bethlehem instead what do we find we find a heavenly announcement given in the the glorious light of angelic presence as we read there when an angel broke into the darkness of that evening to announce to to poor shepherds the greatest birth announcement of all behold I bring you good news good news of great joy for all the people to you is born this day in the city of the city of David a savior who's Christ the Lord good news great joy glory to God and that announcement was made not to royalty not to kings or emperors the news wasn't to share by some herald going around from one place to another to to give that news but that news was given to poor shepherds in fields where they lay on that pitch black night on that hillside above that small town there in Bethlehem shepherds keeping watch over their flocks shepherds staying awake to guard the flocks from from the danger of wild animals the shepherds there doing what they would normally have done at that particular time of year and then wonder upon wonder without it seems any warning at all the the night lights up with the most glorious spectacle of an angel appearing the angel that terrifies the shepherds by by that appearing and they're so utterly afraid the angel announces that great great news the good news of great joy to the glory of God this and the news of the news of the news of the saviour born with a sign indicating where that saviour is born baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger and you know you can just as we read the passage in scripture you know as we see that and here the angels trying to take in this this amazing announcement by this one individual angel then what else do we see we see this an incredible light surrounding these these shepherds a host an army of angels appearing and and they're

even praising God in the language of of the the shepherds as they hear these words being sung glory to God in the highest and an earth peace among those with whom he is pleased then the angels disappear and the bright light the light goes and it's that announcement that announcement that the angel gave along with the heavenly host the heavenly army of angels that's what we want to focus our hearts and minds on as we worship our God this morning as we worship the one true God this morning as we give him the praise and glory for that salvation that's been made possible by the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth and so there's three things that you have in your your notice sheet three very simple headings the first heading good news good news we've come to well almost to the end of another year and at the end of a year there's so often and something in the media reviews of of the year's news you know what's happened in the world well there's a lot that happened in the last year in the last few weeks the news in the world of politics or sport or business world events that you know that are assessed to ascertain has this been a good new year good year a year ago we were saying wishing for a good new year has it been a good year of course how you define good very often in the world we live in how we define good is very much on a subjective basis and certainly in so many ways completely wrong you know think of what Isaiah prophesied in

his warning his warning against against those who were in his time in his society oh to those who call evil good and good evil who put darkness for light and light for darkness who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter this topsy-turvy upside down world that even we we live in in the 21st century never mind Isaiah's time when so often good is is regarded as evil and evil good but in the announcement that the angel made to the shepherds there's absolutely no doubt that this is good news because the source of that news was god and it's god who's who's good good in all his purity good in all his his truth and you know as we were reading there in look 2 notice the number of times the emphasis is on the lord on the lord god because you know the more that we see the emphasis in god giving the news the birth of christ we know it is good news you see the emphasis verse 9 the angel of the lord appeared to the shepherds the glory of the lord shone around them and then you go on a wee bit more in verse 11 where the angel speaks of the savior come who is christ the lord and we're told that heavenly host of angels are giving glory to to god god and you cannot dismiss the truth the fact that god the lord is the source of this news and so it's good news and god's been praised then as he has to be praised now for that good event that happened there in in bethlehem that news in the the hillside two thousand years ago is news that's truly good truly good for for mankind because the good news is proclaimed then that continues to be proclaimed that will continue to be proclaimed until the lord jesus comes that good news is that jesus came to save sinners

he came to save his people from their sins and that news that good news is infinitely infinitely better than than any review of the years that can be seen in relation to the news of of the past 50 odd weeks the good news is that the glorious eternal son of god was born of a woman born through the power of the holy spirit the savior of the world has come the incarnation of the the son of god has happened the invisible has been made visible the promise has now been realized and fulfilled of course at that time as we know in in in that land and of course across the roman empire every birth been recorded for for the census the greatest birth of all has happened and shepherds we don't know how many but shepherds the first people to be told of this good news the good news that the savior had come the good news that the promise christ has come and that good news given first of all to to shepherds but you might ask why shepherds why not the you know the great powers of the age why not to caesar augustus in rome why you know why to humble shepherds well this is no random happening this is no you know chance occurrence that's why we read there in the in micah the prophet micah micah who prophesied hundreds of years before jesus was born micah prophesying that the the promised messiah the promised christ would come from the little town of bethlehem the the city of david micah prophesied that the messiah would be the one who'd come from all eternity and one who'd shepherd his flock and jesus the shepherd of god's people jesus the shepherd king jesus the the son of david jesus in his in his human in his human form human nature descended from from david the shepherd king and now the the shepherd king has come the one who will be the good shepherd who cares for his people this is our lord this is our savior who was born in bethlehem and again i think there's something else that we can't ignore in the fact that it was shepherds to whom this news was first given because think of who these shepherds were they were humble people when mary sang her song of praise to god she she referred to herself as as humble well the shepherds were humble they were actually amongst the lowest of the the ranks of society there in the in first century palestine generally speaking they were poor peasants they would have to hire themselves out to find work to look after the flocks of others and they were despised the shepherds were so despised in society their reputations their reputation of being thieves for example even the religious leaders of the day despised them even though the flocks so many of the sheep that the shepherds looked after would be given for the sacrifices in the temple but they were you know humble despised people they were considered as amongst the sinners in society but it's the sinners of course that the message the good news has come good news the gospel the gospel of the Lord Jesus that's the good news that we we proclaim that message the good news of salvation that's

for you for me to tell others of the angel certainly gave that message the angel gave that message of good news that the saviour is born and it's thirty years later the Lord Jesus the saviour would proclaim that the spirit of the Lord is on me because he's anointed me to preach good news good news to the poor to the oppressed to prisoners to the recovery of sight for the blind to release the oppressed and it's the good news that we proclaim in 2019 towards the end of 2019 and we'll do so and continue to do so the good news that tells others that Christ has come that salvation is found in Jesus alone and that news that brings hope to the hopeless that good news that tells of life to those

who are dead in sin that good news that tells of peace to the troubled in heart the good news that gives joy to the joyless the shepherds we might say were the first evangelists
I mean after all the word for good news in the New Testament language the original language is the word from which we get the word evangelist or evangelized and so these humble evangelists are spreading the news they've heard the announcement that the angels made about the child the Christ child who's born and as evangelists they have that urgency you see that in verse 15 let's go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us and then they're going to tell of what the Lord has made known and see that I mean there's haste there's urgency they know that the message that they've received ultimately is from God they're going to find the child that's the information they've been given as you see there in verse 12 the child who's wrapped in cloth baby clothes lying in a manger they go to where they've been directed by the leading of the Holy Spirit they hurry they're told that they went with haste they've obviously left their sheep in the hillside they have such urgency to see the child born to see the Lord [14:32] Jesus born and as they see the baby as they've seen Christ as they've been told good news they have to spread the good news they have to tell others what they've seen and what they've heard and they do so with joy they do so with great joy as we're told in verse 17 that they made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child that this is the one who is the saviour in the city of David a saviour born who is Christ the Lord having and the words literally having seen they made known having seen Jesus they make him known to others they had to tell others such was the joy in their hearts that they're expressing that joy by telling others of the of the saviour they weren't going to keep the good news to themselves they were the first other than of course Mary and

Joseph to hear that the saviour had been born and are now the first to tell others that Jesus is born these humble shepherds sharing in the joy of the world the joy to the world they had to tell others they couldn't but tell others of that great event that had happened in the little town of Bethlehem what about you do you know joy this Christmas time and indeed throughout the year do you know that joy that fills the hearts of God's people so much so that we have to tell others you know when we think of relationships when we think of joy in relationships that you know brings happiness brings delight if in life there's a measure certainly of joy and happiness and the beauty of loving relationships how much more should there be joy true joy in you who have that saving relationship with the

Lord Jesus and the shepherds they saw the baby Christ they were filled with joy so much so that they had to tell others and you who know Jesus by faith you who have seen Jesus and see him by faith it's your responsibility it's my responsibility to tell others what you've heard and seen in the love of God in sending the Lord Jesus for you but you know when you tell others when you tell others of the Lord Jesus there's always a reaction now for some maybe even many there's quite often hostility for others there might just be a sort of a benevolent neutrality a sort of an indifference even but others will receive the news with joy there's always a reaction when you tell others of the Lord Jesus and in fact when we read there in Luke chapter 2 we saw three reactions or should we say reactions from three different groups which we want to look at more closely for a wee while first reaction from of course the people who heard the shepherd's news and then the reaction of Mary herself and then the further reaction of the shepherds look at the reaction of the people who heard the news that the shepherds gave of the birth of Jesus look at verse 18 that we're told that they wondered and all who heard it wondered even were astonished at what was told them that's what we're told there we're not told anything more than that but certainly from what we read there there's a very strong suggestion certainly as

John Calvin put it as he said as far as the people who heard the news were concerned the news was unaccompanied by any devotion of the heart in other words yes there was sort of an astonished response but that was all that there was nothing else just a wondering at these events that sounded so fantastic you know angels making an announcement the messiah born and born in humble circumstances there in Bethlehem of all places Bethlehem a little town and not a great great city but you see astonishment by itself wonder by itself won't lead a person to Christ unless they're saving faith maybe this time of year there'll be much wonder at the Christmas story maybe even there'll be an element of astonishment at what we read in scripture of the virgin birth but in the wonder and the astonishment by themselves nothing further in complete devotion to the saviour see wonder won't save you astonishment by itself won't give you eternal life in

Christ only when you confess him as Lord and repent of your sins and come to him and submit to his rule and give him your life that's the indication of salvation so the people who heard the shepherds knew they wondered but scripture informs it that seems that all there was just wonder and astonishment but look at Mary's response verse 19 Mary treasured up all these things pondering them in her heart I mean for the shepherds they had this joy that was we might say expressed externally they couldn't keep in their joy at what they'd heard and seen of Jesus but Mary had that internal joy Mary was deep in thought as she treasured up in her heart all that had happened through her I mean Luke tells us that she kept all the things that had happened to her kept these things like treasure you know to keep treasure safe what had happened to her safe in her heart you know think of all that's happened in Mary's life in that relatively short space of time from Gabriel's and Angel

[21 : 16] Gabriel's announcement that she'd be the mother of the Son of God then her giving birth to the Son of God and giving birth in these humble circumstances and then the shepherds coming to witness what they'd been told Mary young Mary young Mary but yet in her spiritual maturity her heart was right with God and she treasured in her heart all that had been revealed to her and happened through her the coming of the Lord Jesus we might say this that Mary's heart contained treasure treasure that was infinitely more rich than all the riches of the Roman Empire this poor young woman from Nazareth she was richer by far through the joy that she had in her heart of that great event that had happened there in that humble occasion she had been so richly blessed being the mother of the saviour and I pray that's an encouragement to you a timely encouragement and an example to you who are in Christ ask yourself you have to ask myself is there a treasury of good things in your heart are you treasuring the word of God are you pondering it are you reflecting on it are you meditating on the word of God are you applying that word in your life or is the word that you read and hear just a throwaway extra maybe retrieved on a

Sunday morning and well just forgotten for the rest of the week I mean truly we should be hoarders hoarders of God's truth and have that treasury of God's truth in your heart that leads you and guides you in all truth your witness for the saviour may it be guided by the treasury that you have in your heart of God's word as you tell of him as you tell of that good news that the saviour's come and that if you like that storing of God's word in your heart it's a discipline I might say it's a spiritual discipline that so much so many of us have neglected in our walk with the Lord but you know if we are to be serious about telling the good news of Jesus sure there has to be that these times when we ponder we reflect on all that God has done for us

I mean even now use the opportunity that this time of year gives you to think deeply of the coming of the Lord Jesus to this world what his coming means as Andy was saying to the children about the true meaning of Christmas I think Charles Purgeon got it right when he well he preached on December the 24th 1854 he preached in London and he said this in relation to this aspect of pondering in your heart he said this celebrate your saviour's birth don't be ashamed to be glad you have a right to be happy rejoice but in your feasting think on the man in Bethlehem let him have a place in your hearts give him the glory think on the virgin who conceived him but think most of all of the man born the child given think most of all on the man born the child given you know we live in a world of such emptiness you see it all around especially at this time of year but you exercise that discipline in your heart whenever you you know think most of all on the man born think on the child given as Mary did but then finally finally the the shepherds respond the further response of the shepherds what are we told we're told that they glorified

God they glorified God you see that in verse 20 they've made known to the people there in Bethlehem that the news of the Christ who's been born they obviously go back to their hillside this hillside are very different men from when they left or when they first maybe went to that hillside and we're told verse 20 as we see the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen as it had been told them I know 2000 years later we can still hear them praising God we can still hear them glorifying God they gave glory to God we'll be thinking more on that glory this evening but you know think for a moment what we've seen in the passage so far we're in verse 14 of angels the heavenly host of angels praising God giving glory to God and how the shepherds are giving glory to God they're praising God they're ascribing in glory they're ascribing that greatness that God is great and giving glory to God they're they're giving him praise for who he is and for he's done in sending his son to be saviour they knew it was God the Lord who had visited his people in mercy they knew it was God who sent his one and only son so they're blessing him for

the gift of the saviour and the example of these shepherds well it's a timeless example that response of faithfulness that response of the faithful in glorifying God and surely it's for all of us to glorify God to describe to God his greatness honour him honour him as God as God do so in response to that great love of God and sending his one and only son and yes use the opportunity that this time of year gives us to give glory to God and for others to see that glorifying of God in our praise and honour of him so glorify him yes in your mind as Mary glorified God in her mind and her thinking glorifying by your words and your actions as the shepherds glorified God by their words and actions and remember this you're glorifying God in earth that's a prelude to your glorifying God in heaven that eternal praising and glorifying God in heaven and then in the new heavens and the new earth and in the glory of the presence of [28 : 15] God in heaven the presence of God there and in the new heaven the new earth there will be that blessing and glory and ascribing to God his wisdom thanking him giving him praise for his power for his might that he is God and God forever that he is your saviour now and forever so give him the glory give him the praise show it by your words show it by your actions tell others that the saviour has come has come to save his people from their sins and so may God bless his word amen let us pray our heavenly father we do indeed give praise and thanks to you for all your goodness to us even in your sending the lord jesus our saviour to save us from our sins and so lord we pray that all that has been said this morning will have been accompanied by your presence and given by the authority that you give to tell others of the saviour lord help us when we are meek and help us when we are weak and even at times ashamed to tell others of the glorious gospel of the lord jesus but lord give us that courage give us that strength to tell others the good news the good news of great joy that is for all the people that the lord jesus has come hear us lord as we continue in praise before you now and we ask these things in jesus name amen well let's close now in psalm 4 psalm 4 on page 4 and we'll sing the last three verses 6 7 and 8 who can show us any good i hear so many say oh lord shine in us with your light show us your face i pray you filled my heart with greater joy than others may have found us to rejoice that harvest time when grain and wine abound i will lie down and sleep in peace my heart will rest secure for you alone oh gracious lord will keep me safe and sure these verses to god's praise anyway

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