

The Manger, the Messengers, the Message

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[0 : 00] All right, well, good morning, everyone.

Welcome again. And as we are preparing our, or to be in our Christmas message this morning, you may take your Bibles and open with me to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2.

And we will be in verses 7 through 20 this morning. And as we saw those videos and the songs, did a very good job on those.

And as we know, it was a night of miracles. The promise of the prophets would be fulfilled that had been prophesied many, many years ago, even in the Old Testament.

So the long wait for the birth of the Savior was over. And so as we consider this, we think of Mary and Joseph and their long taxing trip was over as they went into Bethlehem, their time to be taxed.

[1 : 12] And we see all of these events just folded right into place. Because they hadn't planned on going to the city of David, Bethlehem, but because the decree had gone out to everyone to go back to their place of birth to be taxed, that's where they ended up having to go.

And that fulfilled itself, fulfilled prophecy. So everything all worked toward the miracles. And we know that the birth was in a stable.

It was a very lowly birth as well that had been prophesied. As we think about it, what a strange place for a king to be born, where the ox, where the cattle, where the animals ate.

And that was just not a very clean place. It was not a very sanitary place. It was obviously not a place where anyone would consider spending the night when you go to an inn.

And so the manger was an unusual place for the promised one. But I believe it went right in with all of the prophecies that a Savior would be born.

[2 : 22] He would begin with in a lowly estate. He had left the glory of heaven to become a human being. So he didn't come in glory. He didn't come with pomp and circumstance and a parade and all the things that would normally go with someone of royalty.

And so this morning as we look at this, we will look at the manger, the messengers, and the message, and that they were all about the Christ child.

So this morning as we look into our scripture this morning, we see beginning in verse number 7, the Bible says, And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Verse 8, Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people.

[3 : 47] For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you, you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

[4 : 58] Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told them.

So the first thing that we see concerning the manger was that the manger was his bed. The manger was the bed of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the promised one, the Messiah, the Christ.

Verse 7, And she brought forth her firstborn son, and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And I think we see that the picture of the manger perfectly pictured Christ's rejection. That Christ would be rejected by his very own people. He was not even allowed a place in the hotel or the motel.

So he was rejected from birth. And as he goes on and begins his ministry, we see that as a Savior, ultimately, God's own people, the Jews, rejected their Savior, the one that had been prophesied.

[6 : 11] They said, no, it's not him, because he's not what we expect. And so they did not believe Scripture. They did not obey God's Word. And they did not accept their Savior as the Messiah and the prophesied one.

So there was no room for them in the inn. And the question would go out to everyone listening to this message this morning is, have we been shutting out the Savior?

Have we been shutting him out of our lives? Have we been shutting him out of our decisions? Have we been making decisions on our own without even talking to him and asking God's Holy Spirit for guidance?

So many people all through the year act just like that innkeeper and say, I don't have room in my day for Jesus. I'm too busy for Jesus.

I have all these things that are going on. My day is so crowded with other things that I don't have room to think about him. I don't have room to herald the message of a Savior to the world because I'm so busy.

[7 : 17] I need to go one place to the next, and I'm running late. And so we end up shutting Christ out of our life. And also, I believe that the manger perfectly pictured Christ's redemption.

He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. As a matter of fact, that was something that the Old Testament had prophesied, that they would find him wrapped in swaddling cloths.

Just much like we wrap a baby today to keep them still and to keep them from moving about. He was swaddled in these cloths.

And how would a person be laid in a grave in that day and time? They would be wrapped in grave clothes. And so even what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was wrapped up in as a newborn, I believe that signaled that he came to die.

He would be wrapped in swaddling cloths. The Lamb of God also laid in a manger, pointed to the cross as well. He came to the earth in order to die.

[8 : 29] And I believe the manger also perfectly pictured the availability of Christ for all. Because Jesus wasn't born in an exclusive suite.

He wasn't born in a posh hotel where you had to have a lot of money to get into and to go see him and to be invited to the party or to the shower, so to speak.

Anyone passing by, I'm sure, as they heard the cattle and the sheep, they were able to come in and see the Savior. And as we consider the alls of the gospel, let's first look at Romans 3, verse 23.

Romans 3, 23. The Bible says, What about Isaiah 53, 6?

As a matter of fact, if you want to read about Jesus and about the suffering Savior, just go back to Isaiah. As a matter of fact, the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 53, and certain portions, the Jews basically reject today because they say it cannot point to the Messiah.

[9 : 52] It cannot point to the Savior. So it must have been some type of spurious writing and that this is not what we are looking forward to. And it's not what we're looking for in a Savior.

And so what happened? All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.

So as we look at the alls of Scripture, all have sinned, all have fallen short. No one measures up to God's glory. And so because of that, the sin of all, the sin of everyone who has ever lived and who ever will live.

We're placed upon Jesus Christ. And so the Lord has laid upon the suffering Savior, Jesus Christ, the iniquity or the sins of all.

And so what we see, first of all, is that the manger was where the Savior was laid. The manger was his bed.

[10:57] Now what about the next portion of this picture that we see? What about the messengers? Well, the messengers were of heaven. We see that.

We're going to see that in verses 8 through 10. What were they? They were shepherds. They were abiding in the field by night.

They were watching over their flock. These were shepherds. They were common men. They didn't have to go to shepherd school. They didn't have to get shepherd certified.

They were a bunch of guys who probably had grown up in a shepherding family. And many of them, because of the responsibilities of shepherding life, didn't have the luxury of going to school.

They didn't have the luxury of sitting under a learned scholar and being able to spend their time in philosophical debates and in debates over the law and what did the law mean and what did Scripture teach in this point.

[12:01] And then they would all exhaust that over the next few hours and probably never come to a conclusion. So shepherds didn't have all of that training.

They were watching over their flocks by night. It was a night, probably much like other nights. And then the angel of the Lord, the messenger of God, came from heaven and then everything else or everything was changed.

So now God had the attention of these guys. Well, first of all, they were falling out because they were so afraid. And almost every—we see in popular Hollywood but also in popular culture that angels are beautiful and they're, you know, have wings and have— What happened to every single individual in Scripture that saw an angel?

They were afraid. And I think it was because of the glory. I think it was because of all of the things that surrounded it, in addition to, I mean, who wakes up one day walking down the street, expects to see a heavenly creature standing in front of them and talking to them.

Not many people. But they were afraid. They were afraid. And even the terminology that was used, they were even afraid of their life. What is this? And so they got the attention of these men.

[13:29] They would never be the same. The shepherds were so afraid. But what words do we hear from the angels? They're not. Don't be scared.

Don't be afraid. These are going to be some good words for troubling times is what these shepherds were telling them. Because the Jews were going through very, very difficult times.

They were going through troubled times because of their society, because of being under Roman rule. And they were looking for someone to deliver them from all of this.

And so this angel comes along and says, This is good news. This is great news for troubling times. And it's good news for all people.

1 Peter 5, verse 7. What we can do is we can give our fears over to this person in the stable. The Bible says, casting all your care upon him.

[14:32] For he cares for you. In these troubling times, no matter what times these are, whether it's century 1 or whether it's century 21, we can leave our fears, we can cast our cares upon the Savior and know that he hears and he takes care.

The shepherds go on to find Jesus in the stable, just like they said, just like the angels said they would. So what good examples these shepherds are for us these nights.

They hear the heavenly messenger and they obey the voice of the heavenly messenger. They get on their way. They heard the message and it said immediately they set out to go find the Savior.

So they heard the message. Scripture says also that they heeded the message. And did they stop there?

What did they do after they saw Jesus in the manger? What do we see them doing? They go out and tell others.

[15:44] So they also heralded the message of Jesus. So they go out and they tell everyone else around what was going on. And so they come, they see him, and then they go out and they tell others.

So the message, the messengers were of heaven. Now as we consider the message, what was the message? What was the message of the birth of Christ?

What message did these angels have? And what message do we have today to declare to the world around us? Because you see, Christmastime really is not about Santa Claus.

Sorry to have bursted some people's bubbles. I'm sure no one here. But Christmas is not about Santa Claus. Christmas is not about the North Pole.

Christmas is not about the lights. Christmas is not about the trees. Christmas is not even about the gift giving. Christmas is only about the birth of a Savior.

[16:52] The birth of our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ. So the message was for all. The message is for, it was for the shepherds then.

It was for those that they told. It is for us this morning. And it is for everyone else that we will have the opportunity to talk to and to present this message to others.

Let's look in verses 10 through 12 of Luke chapter 2. Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you what? Good tidings.

That means I bring you good news. That's just an old English way of saying, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to who?

To whom? Remember, the alls of Scripture. All have sinned. All have fallen short of the glory of God. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. The iniquity of us all was laid upon Jesus.

[17:54] And then what do we see? That this good news will be good news of joy to all people. Because we're all sinners. Jesus died for all.

And all have the opportunity to trust Christ as their Savior. The blood of Christ is effective for the salvation of everyone. Does it mean that everyone will trust Christ?

No. But it is effective to everyone. For all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be what? Shall be saved. Everyone who calls out to Christ and says, Lord, I know I'm a sinner and I'm trusting you. The Bible says it is effective for everyone who calls out and says, I am trusting you. So it's good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be the sign to you. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. So what was this Christmas message?

[19:05] The Christmas message and the Christmas message today is a virgin-born baby. Jesus Christ, Savior of all.

This message was also a promise fulfilled. For centuries, there was a promise. There is going to be a Savior.

I will send you a Redeemer. I will send you a Deliverer, God was telling his people. The time arrived. The day had come.

The prophecy was fulfilled. And the message of the prophesied Savior born. That's what we see in this message. So the question we may ask is, what does this Christmas message mean to you today?

So what? That's the question. So what does it mean to you? For some people, the birth of a Savior may mean, oh, this is historical character, and I have no room for this religious thing in my life.

[20:15] So for many, Christmas means Santa Claus. So for many, Christmas means the lights. So for many, Christmas means the shopping and giving and receiving gifts.

But I believe for us, the message, so what does it mean for us? It means that now my sins can be forgiven. I can be a part of God's family.

And I know that my hope and my future is secure in Jesus Christ. And I hope it means the same to you this morning, that this message means a Savior.

So the manger-born Lamb of God died for sinners. And also, as we close this message this morning, like the shepherds, let's be heralders of good news.

Let's not be ashamed to let people know this is the reason for the season. It's Jesus Christ. And let everyone know it's not about Santa Claus.

[21:24] It's not about all the other trappings around Christmas. And let's remember why we celebrate. It's about the birth of a Savior.

Let's pray. Our precious Heavenly Father, thank you for this morning. Thank you for each one here. May we honor you with our lives.

Dear Father, may we honor you today in everything that we do. I pray that you would allow families to be spending the time together as they celebrate the birth of the Savior this week.

I pray, Lord, that this would not just be a unique day that we think about Jesus, but that this would be something that those who are followers of Christ would remember all year long that it's because of Jesus that we have new life.

It's because of our Savior that we can be at peace with you. Bless us today. We thank you, Father, for your goodness. We pray all of this in Jesus' name.
[22 : 40] Amen.