

Christmas Eve Service 2022

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Date: 24 December 2022

Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0 : 00] Amen. This is the Word of God. Let's pray once again as we ask Him to speak to us this evening. Would you pray with me? God, we thank You for the miracle of the birth of Christ, and for the ways that You have announced His coming into the world, and for the joy that it brings us who know You through faith in Him.

And we simply pray now that You would speak to us again in Your Word. And we ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Well, Christmas is a time of wonderful announcements.

I remember as a kid growing up, hearing those joyful words, the joy that came when my parents finally announced that Thanksgiving was over, and it was time to climb into the attic and bring out all the Christmas decorations and begin to decorate the house, get it festive and set up for Christmas.

Normally, my duty was to put the candles in the windowsills and make sure that they were turned on at night. Every now and then, I would wrap the garland up the staircase and make sure that the staircase was decorated.

Or, of course, there was the announcement that it was time to finally come to the dinner table and enjoy the food that my mom had spent all day, probably the day before and the day before that, preparing homemade breads and rolls, cakes and pies, all sorts of sugary treats that we got to fill up on.

[1 : 27] And, of course, the announcement that it was finally time to come and open up the presents under the tree. All year long, you had been waiting and anticipating that moment, expecting and wondering what might be there, looking forward to spending the whole day playing.

And we all know that, of course, all of this proclaiming and rejoicing at Christmastime, all of the announcing and anticipating and delighting is a callback to the announcement that was made over 2,000 years ago in Judea, in the city of Bethlehem.

I wonder how you would choose to announce the birth of the king of the world, the savior of the world, the news that the king of all the earth had been born.

If it were me, I would probably want to make it as big of a deal as I possibly could, spread the news as far and wide as I possibly could, make it a big event, make sure to invite all the most important people, all the most popular people, all the most well-respected people I could possibly find.

But God doesn't think like I do. And that's not what God did. In our passage that was just read from Luke chapter 2, we see the events of the birth of Christ described, the announcement that was made concerning the birth of the savior of the world.

[3 : 05] Joseph, we're told in Luke chapter 2, verse 4, he made the journey from Galilee to Judea to be registered along with his wife, who, oh, by the way, was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth, and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

This was a humble beginning for any child, much more so for this child. You see, right from the very first breaths of Jesus Christ, right from this very first entrance into the world, we get a glimpse, don't we, of his character.

This child, although he is God Almighty himself, was humble. Although he was king of all the earth, he was meek.

Although he was Lord of lords, this child was lowly and laid in a manger. You may be familiar with the old hymn that goes something like this.

[4 : 14] It says, infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall, oxen lowing, little knowing, Christ the babe is Lord of all.

How would you announce the birth of this king? We're told that this birth was not first announced to the richest or to the greatest. It wasn't even announced to many people at all.

Rather, it was announced first to just a few lowly shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Verse 9, it gives us the scene. It says, An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, 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. That, church, in a nutshell, is the gospel.

[5 : 24] That is the message of hope that we have the privilege of believing and bringing out into the world. It's good news of great joy for all people.

And just to drive that point home, he brings that news first not to kings, not to rulers, not to the influential, but to the lowest and lowliest and least influential of all peoples first.

And so it has come to us. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

This is good news of great joy for all people. But you may wonder, why is this good news? And what makes this good news worthy of this response of great joy?

And the answer, I believe, is twofold. And it's found here in the response of this angelic chorus here in verse 14. We're told that the angels, they suddenly burst into this chorus of worship, this multitude of the heavenly hosts, is praising God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[6 : 52] Taking that in reverse order here, two reasons. The first reason why the birth of Christ is good news for great joy is because this birth is the announcement of peace on earth.

Peace on earth among those with whom he is pleased. This birth, the birth of this child, is the beginning of the fulfillment of the plan of God to reconcile sinners to himself.

See, this sinless child entered into a world of sin. He would step into the place of sinners and live as they should have lived.

He was born to die in the place of sinners as we deserve to die for our sin. He was innocent while we were guilty. And because he was innocent, the grave had no hold on him, and he would rise from the grave so that any who know him, any who trust him, any who worship him, can have peace with God.

As Paul says in Romans chapter 5, he says, Since we have been justified by faith, that is, undeserving sinners like us, unimpressive, nothing in our hands to bring to God, declared righteous by simple faith in Christ.

[8 : 21] Since we have been justified by faith in Christ, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That's good news of great joy for sinners like us.

And what a gift it is to know that if you are in Christ, then between you and God there is no longer distance. There's no longer enmity.

There's no longer any rebellion. There's nothing standing between you and him because Christ has come to bring peace on earth with those with whom the Lord is pleased.

I know that for some of you, you don't necessarily feel that peace right now. Christmas may be a difficult time for some of us, a time of family tension, a time when we remember those who used to gather around the table with us who are no longer there.

And my prayer for you this season is that regardless of your circumstance, the God of hope would fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope.

[9 : 43] Christ has come to give peace on earth. But friend, that's not the main point of the Christmas story. There's a second reason here why this birth is good news of great joy.

And it's this, it's that this birth and all that it entails, all that it brought to pass, brings glory to God. Glory to God in the highest.

Glory to a God who has promised and who has fulfilled. Glory to a God whose heart reaches out to undeserving sinners like us.

Glory to a God who steps into his own creation, who turns the ways of the world upside down in order to redeem it, to reconcile us to himself.

Isn't it just astonishing for salvation to come in such a strange way, in such a humble way, for the King of Kings, the Savior of the world, the Son of God himself to be wrapped up in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger?

[10:56] It's astonishing. It's part of the wonder of Christmas that because we couldn't bring ourselves up to God, God himself has come down to us.

You know, no false religion sounds like this. No made-up story would make their God look so foolish and so weak and so helpless.

But you know, God is glorified and doing what only he can do in a way that only he would do it. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

See, this birth brings glory to God in the highest because it is his wise plan to bring salvation to all the peoples of the earth and to create a redeemed people for himself who would praise the glory of his saving grace for the rest of eternity.

As Galatians 4 tells us, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

[12:22] So friend, when you consider the point of this birth, the point of our salvation, the point of our adoption as sons and daughters of God, I want you to think of the glory of God.

The point of all of this is that God in the highest would receive glory, that his name would be magnified. See, the end of peace with God is praise to God.

That's why Christ came. As we reflect on this incredible story of good news and great joy, I just want to encourage you to respond in a couple of ways as we close here this evening.

One is to just take a moment and meditate on peace with God. Peace with God. Christ came that by his blood sinners might have peace with God.

And maybe you realize as you reflect, as you think on these things that you don't have that peace. peace. You don't know what it's like to have peace with God.

[13:40] What better time than now to call out to the Lord in faith and ask him for that gift of reconciliation and peace and to receive that gift of new life in Christ.

What better time than now? Or maybe you know that you have that peace with God but you really, if you're being honest, haven't felt that peace in a while.

You're not walking in the rest and the joy that it is to know peace with God. You're stressed out, strung out, burnt out, worn out and you need peace.

Let's pause this evening and reflect on the peace of God. And the second way I'd like us to respond right now where you are is I want you right where you are to give glory to God.

Give glory to God to him who deserves all praise. Give glory to him who sent his son down to earth for our sake.

[14:43] Give glory to him who has adopted us as sons and daughters of the living God. So let's do that now for a brief silent moment of prayer and reflection as we close.

Would you bow and let's do those two things as we respond. Let's pray silently where we are. Let's pray silently where we are. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Lord, we pray the words that we've already sung. Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free. From our fears and sins, release us. Let us find our rest in thee.

Father, we praise you for the glory of the incarnation of Christ that you sent your son to the earth to redeem sinners like us.

[16:01] Father, there's not a person here who is impressive, who has earned any favor with you. We are all like sheep. We've gone astray. But Lord, you sent Christ to us to lay our iniquity on him.

Lord, that we might know peace with God. And to you be all glory and all the praise and all the honor and all the might forever, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

We're going to conclude our time.