

Why Angels Rejoice

Luke 2:8-14

December 25, 2016

The shepherds visit to baby Jesus, just within hours of his birth, you might turn there in your bibles, if you have your bibles with you to Luke chapter 2 verses 8-14, just to see this for yourself. That account features the announcement of this heavenly visitor, a holy angel who came to say, I bring you good news. Good news. That's a single verb in the language there. It's translated here in our text using four words, "I bring you good news." It's the verb *euangelizo*. We transliterate that word into English as the word, evangelize. It's the origin of that term that we call ourselves the term evangelical. The word points to the essence of that message that we have received from heaven. That message that came at Christmas time, the message that we share with the world.

In the New Testament, the very first historical examples of this verb evangelize, *euangelizo*, are by holy angels. They are portrayed as the first evangelists, which make them the world's

first evangelicals. They rejoice over that evangelical message, the Evangel. That Evangel is just another word for gospel, good news. As the angels come and they evangelize, as they preach that good news, as they bring that gospel, they invite mankind to join them in rejoicing, with glad tidings of great joy. The very first time the good news was given happened when an angel visited Zechariah.

You can turn back just a page or two in your Bibles to Luke chapter 1, verse 19. It's the account where the angel came to Zechariah, the priest. That's the first time that this *euangelizo* verb was used of the holy angels and Zechariah the priest was ministering before the Lord in the temple. And an angel appeared to him. It's not a big space inside the temple. So when the angel appeared to him, standing right beside him, it was shocking. It was sudden, angel appeared to him there and informed him that he and his wife Elizabeth would give birth in their old age, to John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus the Christ. And when Zachariah heard the news, he actually failed to believe. He didn't believe it, and he asked for clarification.

The angel rebuked him, and he said, verse 19, Luke 1, "I am Gabriel, and I stand in the presence of God and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news." That is the first use of the word *euangelizo*, "I bring you good news." For the good news to have its desired effect, it has to be believed. When the proclaimed gospel is combined with the response of faith, it is effectual to give life, to give salvation, and to give the joy of full understanding. The evangelism message, it must be believed before it's apprehended, and it's understood. And that is especially clear, as we see Gabriel make his second visit to the virgin Mary. He announced good news to her as well and she responded immediately in faith. That's the right response.

Look at Luke 1:30 and follow along just a few verses there. Luke 1:30, "The angel said to Mary, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be since

I'm a virgin?' The angel answered her. 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.'"

Again, what Gabriel came and announced to Mary, that is the essence of the good news, this Evangel that God is sending his Son to earth, in the flesh taking on human flesh, coming through the womb of Mary and Mary gets it. Doesn't she? She understands, down in verse 46. She sounds forth a hymn of praise that we call the Magnificat. And she says, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." She understood the import and the impact of this message. It's salvation for her.

She has clearly believed and understood, she has entered into the sublime heights here, of angelic joy. She believed the Evangel, announced by Gabrielle and she entered into the same kind of joy that marked his glad tidings as well. And that brings us back to our text, Luke chapter 2 verses 8 and following. Luke 2:8, and we find this verb *euangelizo* used again, Gabriel comes to the shepherds to announce the birth of

Jesus. He's even joined at the end of that, uh verse 13, by a host of angels who are all praising God with him and they rejoice as they evangelize the shepherds.

I'm gonna read that text, once again, Luke 2:8 to 14, "In the same region, there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night, and an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with fear. 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. And this will be a sign for you, you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, and lying in a manger.' 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 among those with whom he is pleased.'"

Throughout Scripture, we find holy angels taking great pleasure in giving good news to men, they seem of all their duties, they seem to revel in this opportunity, counting it a

high and holy privilege to speak good news to men. And to evangelize, here at the birth of Christ, stands at the very pinnacle of all their angelic duties. Clearly, they are here rejoicing at the very first Christmas.

The question we want to ask and answer this morning is Why? Angels are not the recipients of salvation. There are holy angels and there are unholy angels, we call them demons. Demons are forever reprobate; they are forever damned. Holy Angels are forever in Heaven, worshipping God, praising for all of eternity. So why here are the angels rejoicing in a message that has to do with us? After all, this is our Savior, not theirs. This is our salvation from sin, not their salvation. Holy Angels are not the ones facing punishment. It's not their souls in danger of eternal damnation. Salvation is for mankind, not for angelkind. So what do they stand to gain in the incarnation of the Son of God? Born of the Virgin Mary, sent to be the savior of men.

The short answer to that question, it's all about joy. It's all about rejoicing. It's all about praise. And as we unpack the

reasons for their joy, for angelic joy, we're going to find reasons for our own joy. We're going to see our salvation here in an entirely new light. As we look at the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ, through the eyes of angels, this morning. We're going to go to greater depths of our appreciation for what God did for us at this very first Christmas, the meaning of it all. The more we understand, the deeper the gratitude, the greater the joy. And hopefully we'll come away, desiring more than anything to join the angelic chorus as joyful evangelical witnesses.

If you're taking notes this morning, I got a little outline here to help us frame our thoughts. We're gonna see four reasons this morning for why the angels rejoice. Here's the first reason, angels rejoice at the cessation of God's wrath. Angels rejoice at the cessation of God's wrath, or if you'd like a shorter word. Angels rejoice at the end of God's wrath, the end of God's wrath. You say, wrath, on Christmas. Yeah. You will never appreciate the greatness of salvation until you understand the true gravity of your danger, right? You say, fair enough. But where do you find wrath in the text? Good question.

Take a look at Luke 2:8 and 9 again. "In the same region, there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, the glory of the Lord shown around them, and they were filled with fear." Fear. That's the implication folks, that they feel, that they're under the just condemnation and wrath of God. They weren't afraid here because some cute cherub looking angels showed up playing harps on the fields, outside of Bethlehem. You know the kind I'm talking about right, drawn in pastel colors on Hallmark cards or fat little babies with wings attached to their backs. That is not what terrified the shepherds here.

What filled these folks with fear? We can start with the suddenness of this angelic appearance, right? That had to frighten anybody, startle anybody, that, that would have startled the shepherds here, especially on a very dark, as we just sang, a silent night. The shepherds had come in from a hard day out in the fields. They corralled their sheep into those enclosures, the sheep folds, that they'd constructed out in the fields adjacent to Bethlehem. The sheep are out of the elements, they're sheltered from the weather, they're protected from wild animals and thieves. And so the shepherds were finally able to

relax a bit, to let their guard down, to settle in for the night.

When this angel the Lord visited, it seemed as if all the lights in the universe seem to go on at once. They're surrounded here by a blinding Shekinah glory of the Lord, which is absolutely terrifying to them. The light itself would have been shocking to the senses, they were resting there in the dark night and their, their pupils would have been wide open to let in as much light as possible. So that this suddenness of the brightness of divine glory, their retinas would have felt even seared by that blinding light out in those fields. Probably suffered from some temporary blindness even.

The greatest fear came when they realize that this angel is inside the camp. Suddenly, without warning, shepherds here had been, it says they're "keeping watch," they've been standing guard, they're on the lookout for threats, but suddenly standing right beside them. Way too close. There's this terrifying presence. He didn't approach from a distance, walking up to

their camp from far away. He just appeared, so to speak, he materialized, fearsome stranger, no way to protect themselves.

The adrenaline rush alone could have caused them to lose consciousness and combined with the blazing glory of the Lord and the, the loss of their sight. Here they are in the presence of this angel. He's right beside them. Is he friend or foe? Am I in danger? They're overcome here. No wonder they're filled with fear. But there's more. It's not simply the fact that they're startled, blinded, frightened by an unexpected stranger. This is no ordinary stranger. This is an angel. Cause for incredible terror.

Throughout Scripture, whenever angels show up, they cause significant trauma and fear and dread for human being. When you think about angels, don't imagine one of those precious moments looking figurines that sit on grandma's shelf. Those are the product of sentimental imagination from biblically illiterate people. Angels in Scripture are a terrifying presence for human beings. Great fear is the common reaction when people see angels and this angel is identified as an angel of the Lord. One who is

often dispatched as an angel of death. This angel of the Lord is a terrifying angel. Remember, it was the angel of the Lord, just one angel of the Lord, who killed all of Egypt's firstborn in a single night. It was one single angel of the Lord who put the Assyrian army to flight from the city of Jerusalem.

Second Kings 19:35 says this, "That night, the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when the people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies." So it's not just children, men, soldiers, children, all of them, they're nothing to one angel. These shepherds knew that biblical history because it was the history of their own nation. They knew the nature of this visitor who entered that camp that night. They knew what angels could do. The angel of the Lord in particular. Notice those first words of the angel, "Fear not." Fear not, had to be a special grace of God to allow these shepherds to obey that command; Fear not, to calm them, but they needed to be calm. So they could listen to the Evangel. So they could listen to what the angel had to say.

Especially important is that command, fear not. Because verse 13, tells us that it's not just one angel that shows up. It's a multitude of the heavenly host, they're about to arrive. Our translations sort of hide the nature of this heavenly host, it was literally an army of angels lined up in ranks, ready for battle. The Greek word here is *stratia*, a military unit. So this is one massive regimen of the armies of the living God. So if they're filled with great fear at the presence of just one angel, the appearance of the angelic army, literally would have frightened them to death. Listen, this is the typical human reaction to the presence of angelic beings. Holy angels inspire great dread.

Notice in Scripture that oftentimes demonic presences do the opposite. Demonic presences come to calm people, angelic presence, the presence of the holy, cause great fear. They're awesome in appearance, these angels, human beings are instinctively afraid. And it's not just their intimidating presence as these soldiers are in a heavenly army, it's the fact that they represent the holiness of God himself. This is an angel of the Lord, by the way, and he's accompanied by the engulfing glory of the Lord.

There's gonna come a day when human beings are at home, and at rest in the presence of the holy, at home and at rest in the presence of the holy angelic host, the holy glory of God, the holy presence of God himself. One day, when we are without sin completely, we're going to be before the presence of holiness, and be completely at ease. But not this day. Not yet. This fearful reaction of the shepherds is evidence of the enmity that exists between sinful humanity and the holy God.

These angels represent Holy God, and sinful man are rightly fearful. These shepherds feared death at the hand of the angelic visitor, and that is fitting, because they are in a condition of sin, which makes them enemies of God. Sinful men at enmity with God, they are also at enmity with the angel of the Lord, they're at enmity with the entire multitude of the heavenly host. And when you are alone, out in the middle of a field, outside of Bethlehem, and they appear to you, folks, be afraid, very afraid. That is a bad place to be.

Herein lies the true message of Christmas. One of the reasons that the angels rejoice, because angels are often sent from heaven to execute judgment on sinful people. In fact, when you read the book of Revelation, you find angels all through the book of Revelation. And you know what, sometimes their task is? Judgment. They are blowing trumpets calling for judgment on the earth. They're pouring out bowls of divine wrath upon the earth. It's not a pretty picture. It's terrifying. But here, rather than coming to mankind for war, they come to announce peace. They come to announce an end of enmity with God, a cessation of the wrath of God, that's coming. Great joy for the angels to make that announcement.

I have friends who spent years in Iraq and Afghanistan, fighting wars against Islamic soldiers and my friends were very good at their jobs, very effective at hunting down terrorists. And though they like any soldier, though, they found great satisfaction in fulfilling their mission. Some of the greatest joy they found in their military service was not in hunting down terrorists, but in helping the indigenous population.

One friend sent me some photos and prominent among those photos of him out there, was of him providing medical aid to some Afghani children. There was a huge smile across his face. It's like that for angelic warriors too. Who are joyful at the opportunity to deliver good news, not just good news, but the best news the world has ever heard. Rather than coming to execute death sentences for yet more sinful men, they rejoice in telling sinful men, fear not. Fear not, because the day has come for a cessation of hostility, an end to the enmity between God and men and ends the wrath of God, for your sin. That's one reason the angels rejoice. But it points to even deeper reasons for their joy.

Let's look at a second reason for angelic joy. Number two, angels rejoice at the revelation of God's Son. They rejoice at the revelation of God's Son. Look at Luke 2:10 to 12. "The angel said to them," these shepherds, "'Fear not. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'" They had great fear. And now he's pronouncing great joy. Love the contrast there. Why? "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a

sign for you, you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, and lying in a manger."

Notice the entire focus of this Evangel. This good news is centered on the significance of a baby born in Bethlehem. This is a Christ centered message. And like Gabriel, all the holy angels stand in the presence of God. And they have all known the pre-incarnate glory of the Son of God. And so for them, to come to humanity, to share with men, the true identity of this one whom they have loved and worshipped and adored, this is the very height of their joy.

They are sharing with us, a friend, a king, a God who they love. Can you identify with that? Do you know and love and worship and adore Jesus Christ in such a way that just sharing the truth about him with others? Is that enough to bring joy to your soul? No matter what the outcome is, if it earns you praise or persecution. Do you take joy in just proclaiming his name? They did. That was the target, that was the object of their message. And they love to proclaim him, to glorify him to make

him known. If that's you, then you're in the very company of the angels of heaven.

I want to show you six facts that they deliver here in this Christmas message, this message that the angel rejoices to share with the shepherds and it's all about Jesus Christ. Look at it there in verse 11. First, God's son was born, God's son was born. This is an unparalleled, unprecedented, non-repeatable event. This is the incomprehensible, unexplainable paradox of the incarnation of the Son of God. It is that the invisible God has made himself visible in Jesus Christ. How does that work? Invisible, being visible. Does that not make the invisible now visible and no longer invisible? No. That's the mystery of the Trinity, right?

He has already existed as the eternal God, the second person of the Trinity, since before time began. As it says in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things were made through him without him was not anything made that has been made." That is, if it's in the category of made,

of created, it's not him. He is the Creator. Yet here he enters his own creation, in the form of a little baby boy. He came into the world like every other man or woman since Adam and Eve, he came through the womb, which makes him fully human.

Why is that important? Because this Savior, who is Christ the Lord needed to be not only fully God, so he could have the eternal, infinite nature to absorb all the full infinite wrath of God, but he also had to be fully man, fully man to fully represent us in our sinfulness. He's the one sent to reconcile God to man, which he does by uniting man to God in his own person.

First of all, receiving all of our just punishment, but second of all, transferring to us all of his perfect righteousness. It's a glorious mystery. Really is beyond our full comprehension, to understand this, but it is the message of Christmas that we believe, we find salvation, we find great joy. Second fact here, is that God's son is born this day, henceforth known to us as Christmas Day. That is to say, it came at a certain point in time, as Paul says, in Galatians, "born in the

fullness of time, born of a woman." So secondly, God's son is born this day.

Third, God's son is born in the city of David, which is Bethlehem. So he's born at a particular time, and in a particular place. And when the shepherds in verse 15, said, hey, let's go see, you know what, they were only able to do that because of, he was born in a particular time, and in a particular place. They were able to enter an actual town at that very moment, and see an actual human child.

So the incarnation of the Son of God is a historical reality. It's not in the category of myth, or fairy tale. Like every other world religion is based on, built on fairy tale and myth. This is rooted in fact. In history. It's an actual event, that's marked on a calendar, that's located on the map. This is real history folks, actual facts. Which are the basis of our faith in the Savior, who was born on Christmas Day.

Number four, God's son is born as a savior. He's born as a savior, which not only points again to the danger that we're in, we're sinners condemned before a holy God, but much more encouragingly, this also indicates the grace of God, his tender mercy toward us. The fact that there is a savior implies we need to be saved from something. But the fact that there is a savior implies that God intends to save us from something. That's good news, isn't it?

As we said the shepherds they were innately, acutely aware of their danger. The fact of their sinfulness in the presence of a holy angel, they knew they needed to be saved from God's judgment. They knew God's judgment toward them and their sin was just. As does every single one of us folks. The angel rejoiced to announce that God had made provision for them in this child, with his birth. That is the message of Christmas.

Fifth, God's son is born as the Christ. He's born as the anointed one, he's born as the Messiah. That is to say, this is no ordinary baby. He's the promise king of Israel. He is the one who will usher in the restoration of their nation. He is the one

who will reign and rule on the throne of his father, David. This Christ is the one before whom the entire world will bow and pay homage, King of kings and Lord of lords. He commands the allegiance of everyone, kings and kingdoms. Ruling them with a rod of iron. Significance of this good news of great joy, full humanity, fulfilled prophecy, historic reality, tender mercy, messianic prophecy.

And finally, the six point here God's Son is the Lord. The Lord, don't miss the significance of that term, Lord. It is the glory of the Lord that appeared to the shepherds, verse 9. The shepherds in verse 15 acknowledged that the Lord is the one who'd revealed himself to them. And here, it's the Savior who is, equals the Lord. He is the Lord. There's an emphasis here on the Savior's divinity and his sovereignty. Folks, this is no ordinary man. What started with normal humanity has escalated here and each subsequent term to reveal his full divinity. Absolutely remarkable.

From an angelic perspective, this is no surprise to them, the surprise to them is, his humanity. They've seen his

divinity. They have worshiped in the presence of the son, the second person of the Trinity, ever since the day that they were created by Him. They witnessed God's Son create the entire world, Hebrews 1:2. As Paul wrote in Colossians 1:16, "By him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." What are the invisible beings that God created, Christ created? The angels.

For instance, "whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authority, all things were created through him and for him." So after the Son of God created the angels, they watched Him command the rest of creation to existence. They were there when he "sunk the bases of the earth," Job 38:6, "and laid its cornerstone," and they erupted in praise. It says there, that "the morning stars," that's a reference to the angels. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Prior to his incarnation, the angelic host had known the qualities of God's Son for more than 4,000 years. They had witnessed his special creation of mankind, their special purpose as image bearers of God, his special relationship with them, they'd watched all of that.

They'd watched in sadness and in sorrow as their humanity fell in Adam and Eve, their rebellion against him the one they loved with a, with a holy, perfect, sinless love, they watched humanity turn on him. The one they entrusted implicitly, unfaithfully, they watched as mankind departed in unbelief, left the garden, took on the curse, entered into a cursed existence. But now with the incarnation of God's Son, born this day in the city of David, there witnessing yet another wonder of God, a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

And that's why Isaiah 9:6, as Paul read earlier, "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, and also the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." No wonder the angels were rejoicing. This is the more, most glorious news that's ever been announced on the earth or ever will be. The angels had the joy of putting the sword of judgment back in its sheath, and instead coming down to these shepherds to tell them this good news of great joy. Sharing with these sinful shepherds, fear not, I bring you good tidings of great joy. I want to share with you, my lord. That's their joy.

They rejoiced in sharing with shepherds, with all of humanity, with us as well today. The Son of God whom they've known, whom they loved. That's the joy of Christmas, isn't it? Let's consider a third reason the angels rejoice. Number three, angels rejoice at the salvation of God's people. The salvation of God's people. We've already seen it read in the text several times. None of this evangelical news would really matter to us, if it weren't for the advantage that God intended for his people.

Look at verse 10 again, because it's very clear, there, "The angel said to them, 'Fear not for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for," whom, "all the people.'" And then in the beginning of verse 11, "For unto you is born a savior." Listen, this proclamation of "good news of great joy." It's not just for the privileged and the powerful. It's not for all rich people. It's not for all the politicians, it's not for all the people, "might makes right," and they can roll over anybody. It's not about their stock going up. It's for all the people, rich and poor, small and great, white Collar, blue collar, all kinds of collars, red necks, too; everybody, shepherds, princes, all kinds of people.

For these Bethlehem shepherds counted as nobodies in that day, they really were. Shepherds were almost a despised people. It was God's special grace to send the angels to them. And the angels in particular rejoice to tell them, that this Savior is born for them, personally. These shepherds are elect shepherds.

They may have been nobodies among their own society, but the angels rejoice to tell them that they are verse 14, "those with whom God is pleased." That is to say they're favored, they're privileged. They just thought of themselves as regular old shepherds, bumping around the fields, stubbin' their toes on rocks, cleaning up after sheep. No. They're elect shepherds.

They have been counted among those whom God has granted his special pleasure, to save them. It's a select group, a privileged group of people indeed, listen, the peace of God rests, not upon all people without exception. The Bible does not teach that all people are going to heaven. The peace of God rests only upon those whom he's chosen. And we learned that from the very last term there in the text of verse 14, it's the term

eudokia, which is rendered in our translation "with whom he is pleased." Another way to translate that phrase is "peace on those whom he is pleased to grant it." Whenever this term is used in Luke's Gospel, number of times, it refers to God's pleasure in the outworking of his sovereign will. So this Christmas Evangel, this good news is about the outworking of God's sovereign grace.

It's as Paul told the Ephesians, Ephesians 1:5, that God "predestined his people to be adopted as children into his family, through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." The idea here then is, what the angels are rejoicing in, is the fact that God's peace, through the Savior born that day in Bethlehem, it rests upon those whom God has chosen, in accordance with his good pleasure. Listen, this is such good news. Such good news. I know myself. I know some of you too. Look, folks, we are not those who are first chosen on the team, are we? There's nothing beautiful in us. Except the fact that we reflect the image and the glory of God, being image bearers of him and yet that image is a distorted image because of the fall. There's nothing that makes us acceptable in God's sight.

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

Even the best that we have to offer, Isaiah tells us 64:6, "all of our righteous deeds are like filthy rags." And take all of our good works and everything that we think we have to offer, that makes us better than our fellow man, and offer those up to God. You know what they smell like to God? Dirty clothes. That's an insult to him. Such good news. Because it's not up to us. It's up to God. God has bypassed the strong and the proud. God has bypassed the arrogant and the haughty and he has put his grace upon the lowly.

That's why Mary rejoiced. Luke 1:46, when she said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, because" and he, she says, "my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, because he has looked upon the humble estate of his servant." She knew what she was. She continued in that same theme down in verse 50. "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation, he has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud and the thoughts of their hearts. He's brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate. He's filled the hungry with good things, the rich, he sent away empty."

That message about the subversion of the proud and the mighty, to show grace to his humble people, those who fear him from generation to generation. That's a message that formed the heart of the evangelical witness of these angels, when Christ was born in Bethlehem. That brings us to a final reason the angels rejoiced here. They rejoice number one, at the cessation of God's wrath. Number two, at the revelation of God's Son. Number three, at the salvation of God's people. And finally, number four, angels rejoice at the magnification of God's glory. The magnification of God's glory, or the exaltation of God's glory, two aspects of God's glory here, I want you to see, that brought joy to the angels.

As I said, the very beginning, the angels are not the ones who are the subjects and the targets of divine salvation, are they? They just rejoice in telling people about it. That shows their love for the glory of God. They love his glory, they love his, his character, who he really is, his identity, his person, his work. They just love to explain that to people. In and of itself, that message that they get to speak is enough for them. That's our gift too. Doesn't matter how many gifts are under the tree for you this Christmas, if there are no gifts at all. In

fact, if you're in the greatest human debt, you can be rich with this message.

First aspect of God's glory that their proclaim comes in verse 12, when the angel said there, "This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." Why is that an evidence of God's glory? Because he delights to magnify himself in weakness. What we count as weakness with no strength, he says, "Ah opportunity for me and me alone to be glorified." Notice the tender mercy of God and the kindness of his condescension and grace.

Not only has the Savior been born for you, verse 11, there is a sign for you. The sign is a swaddled baby lying in a manger. That is the very picture of humility, of a divine power that's made perfect in human weakness. That baby is completely dependent. Mother swaddles the baby so the baby doesn't scratch itself with its fingernails. So the baby's comforted and secure and warm. Baby's absolutely dependent, lying in a manger waiting for what? Food, getting rest, left to its own, that baby will not survive. In that dependency, God showed himself, strong,

after what the shepherds just heard, a human baby fulfills prophecy, save sinners, descends from David, anointed by God to be Israel's King, who is incarnated as the Sovereign Lord, they had to wonder, what in the world is he doing on a feeding trough? That's a good question.

The answer is in that word, sign. It's a strange enough predicament for any newborn baby to be found in a, in a manger, but particularly for this baby. The searching shepherds would know for certain that this baby and no other was the one whom the angel spoke. So it's a perfect sign for the shepherds to go and make the correct identification. But significance of the sign is in the contrast, to how a king should enter the world. The sign signifies the essence of Christ's mission, provides a clearer picture that in Christ God draws nearer to the humble. Job said, Job 22:29, "God saves the lowly" or as David fully knew, Psalm 138:6 "For though the Lord is on high. He regards the lowly."

Summed up in Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the Lord who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:

'I dwell in a high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, to revive the heart of the contrite.'" Is there anybody higher than God? No. Anybody more holy, anybody more resplendent, anybody more magnificent than God? No, no, no and no. Yet he condescends and he dwells with the humble and contrite. The birth of God's son, to be laid into a rough, hewn feeding trough for animals.

It's a clear indication, God is basically foreshadowing and forecasting what he intends to do as he associates himself with the lowly and it causes these powerful angels who rejoice in the subversion of human power structures, causes these powerful angels to rejoice. In fact it's what causes the heavens to open up, to reveal this eruption of praise from, that angelic army. Mustered up, standing in their ranks, ready not to go to war, but to go to peace.

Look at Luke 2:13-14. Here is the second aspect of divine glory that they rejoiced in. "Suddenly there was an, with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'"

This is a call here to, to rejoice by this angelic host inviting all men kind to render joyful praise to God. I bet if you or I were there on that field that night, just seeing that angelic army, we'd been compelled to worship. Don't ya think? This holy army of heaven is a symbol, not to march into battle, not to execute judgment on the earth, as they will one day. Rather they have been mustarded up to call mankind to join them in giving glory to God.

On the one hand this is exhortation to mankind. That is ascribe glory to God, give him the glory due his name. On the other hand this is a prayer to God for peace. Which will be fulfilled through the messiah. As the angels rejoice in this magnification of God's glory, through the birth of Jesus Christ, in the revelation of God's son, for the salvation of his people. They are also here praying a blessing of peace will fall among mankind. Folks, no one can comprehend the longing for peace. Or

know what it takes to accomplish peace or even appreciate the reality the enjoyment of peace, like a soldier.

These angelic warriors, they know what peace demands. They know paradoxically that man's peace with God will be won only through warfare. The announcement of peace was the declaration, a heavenly declaration of war. Which would be won by heaven's champion. Peace would come by means of the most profound war. Conducted by the greatest soldier, the commander of the host of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll overcome the greatest opponents, sin, Satan, death. And he'll win the greatest victory, which is life eternal. It's a peace that was won on the cross as God "made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." No wonder the angels rejoiced, right?

The opportunity to evangelize, to proclaim this gospel, must have been a particular delight for these holy angels. The Bible tells us the angels take great pleasure in observing, really from the outside, kind of, almost as we're looking over the fence into somebody else's backyard. They enjoy looking at

God's redemptive relationship with us. With frail human beings, fills them with wonder. Peter said, in 1 Peter 1:12, "The things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven," that is this Evangel, this gospel message, "those are things in which angels long to look."

They don't fully understand this glory that we enjoy. And yet they rejoice in it as if it were their own message, for themselves with themselves as the targets of God's grace. According to Hebrews 1:14 The angels, they were not created to have that special relationship with God, they were created instead as "ministering spirits. Sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation." Who's that? That's us.

And that's why on this occasion, this visit, to these lowly shepherds in the fields outside of Bethlehem. This was their supreme pleasure and joy. This is the purpose for which they're created. To serve the elect. They came to announce the good news of Immanuel, God with us. That God has taken up residence with man kind in the person of Jesus Christ, born that day, in the



city of David, we call that day Christmas Day and we enter into the angel's joy to participate with them, as true evangelicals. We're offered a profound joy and privilege of joining their ranks here.

Which we can do by believing their evangelistic message of good news. Like all the holy angels who believe everything God tells them, we enter into the same joy by believing everything God tells us. We rejoice with them in the end of God's wrath, in the revelation of God's son, in the salvation of God's people, and the full exaltation and magnification of God's glory. We become their partners of joy as we join their ranks as fellow evangelists to proclaim peace on earth through salvation in Jesus Christ. That's the message we have the privilege to share this Christmas. Amen?

If there are any of you here, who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to talk with me, talk with one of us after the service. Anybody who is sitting around here who looks like they belong here, just talk to them and ask them, Hey do you know this message of the Gospel? And if they say, no, say,

well then come with me because were going to find somebody who does," because we love to explain more thoroughly, more fully the real meaning of Christmas in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Our father, it is our joy and privilege and pleasure to join in the rejoicing with the angels, as we sing these last few songs. I know that our hearts are more fully informed, our minds have greater understanding than perhaps they did when we came in this, this building, this place today. And we ask Father that you would help us with hearts filled with gratitude to express great joy to you, for the gift of your Son that you have given.

Thank you for bringing us together today and as we said at the very beginning for putting this Christmas Day on the Lord's day. You have combined the incarnation the entrance of the son of God into the world through the virgin Mary, you've combined that with the remembrance of the Lord's Day, of His resurrection and with His birth and His resurrection, His perfect life, his death on the cross, his resurrection and ascension to you, all of it is contained. We rejoice because Christmas means for us,

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who are believers, who are numbered among the elect, shepherds, and angels, it's our joy to anticipate our own resurrection from this body, one day to be with you forever. Is there any greater gift father than the gift of your son? Thank you for allowing us, this day, to worship you, to praise you for your glory. It's in Jesus' name we pray.