
ADVENT

TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter

December 11, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Many Americans seem to be depressed, fearful, anxious, and pessimistic about their future. The hardships we face are certainly to be considered, but it is worth our attention to study these in light of the hardships others have faced before us (and the atrocities some are facing even today). Upon an honest reflection, one may come to realize that the world is a place of constant adversity – for everyone. Can there be joy amid all of this? If so, where is joy to be found? In this message, we will consider the tidings of great joy, which Christ embodied at His coming as the infant King.

LUKE 2:8-20

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 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. 11 For ***unto you is born this day*** in the city of David ***a Savior, who is Christ the Lord***. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “***Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!***”

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “***Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.***”

16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they ***made known the saying*** that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 ***But Mary treasured up all these things***, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY:

Treasuring God's good tidings will surely bring great joy.

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

(1) WHY SUCH FEAR?

(2) WHAT WERE THE "GOOD TIDINGS"?

(3) TO WHOM WERE THE "GOOD TIDINGS" ANNOUNCED?

(4) VARIOUS RESPONSES TO THESE "GOOD TIDINGS"

MESSAGE

(1) WHY SUCH FEAR?

- “an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and *they were filled with great fear.*” (v9).
 - KJV – “*they were sore afraid...*”
 - Fear is an appropriate response to glory by sinful people.
 - When Jesus raised the widow's dead son back to life, everyone was “*seized with fear*” (Lk. 7:16).
 - When Jesus delivered the man who was possessed by a Legion of demons, the people who had once feared the man now became “*seized with fear*” regarding Jesus. They even asked Him to leave (Lk. 8:37).
 - When Jesus calmed the storm, making the wind and waves obey His voice, the disciples were “*filled with fear*” (Mk. 4:41).
 - When Jesus transfigured and showed a glimpse of His glory among His disciples, the Bible says “*they fell on their faced and were terrified*” (Matt. 17:6).
 - **We are going to be afraid of something...**
 - The Bible tells us that God is to be feared *more than demons*, more than *storms*, and more than *death*.

(2) WHAT WERE THE “GOOD TIDINGS”?

- *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* (v10-11).
 - Spurgeon – “The Jews unanimously believed that if any man beheld supernatural appearances, he would be sure to die... But the first word of the gospel ended all this, for the angelic evangelist said, *“Fear not, behold I bring you good tidings.”* Henceforth, it is to be no dreadful thing for man to approach his Maker; redeemed man is not to fear when God unveils the splendour of his majesty, since he appears no more a judge upon his throne of terror, but a Father unbending in sacred familiarity before his own beloved children.”¹
 - What Joy indeed!
 - God’s promise of such a Savior had gone out way back at the beginning (Gen. 3:15).
 - God had reiterated His promise and detailed it throughout the ages.
 - The last prophet who spoke before 400 years of silence proclaimed that the “Day of the Lord” was coming, and that a prophet would come as a forerunner of the blessed Savior (Mal. 4:5-6).
 - After all that time had passed, John the Baptist came preaching a message of repentance. Thus, he showed himself to be preparing the way of Christ the Lord (Lk. 3:16).
 - And, when Christ came, there was never a better reason to possess great joy!
 - Christ offers incomparable joy to all who hear and believe His word (Jn. 15:11, 17:13).
 - But, what “word”?
 - Christ is Savior!
 - The idea has been presented numerous times and in various ways, but the idea is a good one that must be understood.

¹ Spurgeon, C. H. (1871). Joy Born at Bethlehem. In *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (Vol. 17, p. 698). London: Passmore & Alabaster

- Christ is not just a good man, an interesting philosopher, a charismatic leader, a spiritual guru, a wise sage, or a fine example...
- No! Christ is Savior! He is the King of glory and the suffering Servant.
- The “*good tidings*” are that “*there is a Savior,*” and He is “*Christ the Lord!*”

Main Point: Let us Treasure such Tidings

(3) TO WHOM WERE THE “GOOD TIDINGS” ANNOUNCED?

- “*I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people!*” (v10).
 - “*for all the people*”
 - All kinds of people heard the “good tidings”
 - Shepherds, an unnamed group, Magi or wise-men, Herod, and a host of others...
 - The “good tidings” benefit anyone who will hear and believe (or trust) in Christ as Savior...
 - “*to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God...*” (Jn. 1:12).
 - While the offer of mercy goes out far and wide, only those who hear and believe the “good tidings” will actually enjoy the benefits thereof

Main Point: Only those who Treasure God’s good tidings will have great joy.

- “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*” (v14).
 - KJV – “*Good will toward men...*”
 - It is “*good will*” or “*favor*” or “*pleasure*” that is spoken of here, but it is God’s “*good will*” / “*favor*” / “*pleasure*” in focus.
 - Paul spoke of this idea when he quoted the prophet Isaiah: “*now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation...*” (2 Cor. 6:2, cf Is. 49:8).

(4) VARIOUS RESPONSES TO THESE “GOOD TIDINGS”

- Various Responses in our text
 - The Shepherds (at first) – “And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and *they were filled with great fear*” (v9).
 - The Shepherds (after hearing and believing) – “And the shepherds returned, *glorifying and praising God* for all they had heard and seen” (v20).
 - Unnamed People – “And *all who heard it wondered* at what the shepherds told them” (v18).
 - Mary – “*Mary treasured up all these things*, pondering them in her heart” (v19).
 - **Summary – “fear,” “praise,” “wonder,” and “treasure”**
- Other responses from elsewhere in the Bible
 - The “wise men” or “Magi” – “*we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him*” (Matt. 2:2).
 - Herod – Herod, an accomplished politician and war general, was now in his later years of life. He had hard-won his kingly authority and fended off many threats to it, and then came the claim that there was an infant who had been born “King of the Jews.” Herod would not tolerate such a thing, and he set out to violently oppose the so-called infant king (Matt. 2:13-16).
 - **Summary – “worship” and “violent opposition”**
- Some other responses
 - Indifference – “Oh, that’s nice... What’s for dinner?”
 - Procrastination – “I will pay more attention to this when I _____.”
 - Arrogant Disbelief – “I don’t need a Savior; I will work this out on my own...”
 - Hatred – “Who are you to tell me that I am bad?!”

What is your response to these “good tidings”?

Treasuring God’s good tidings will surely bring great joy.

APPLICATION

For the unbeliever or “thus far poor responder”:

- Do you have “great joy”?
 - What brings it?
 - How do you keep it?
- Consider the tidings.
 - Don’t you have need of a Savior?
- Consider the source.
 - An angelic messenger from God brought these good tidings.
- Consider the responses of those who heard and saw.
 - These tidings were humbly and wonderfully received.

For the believer (who may be experiencing less Joy today than you’d like):

- Do you have “great joy”?
- Remember and Treasure these good tidings!
 - There is a Savior! He is Christ the Lord!
 - He has brought salvation to your weary soul!
 - Thomas Reade – “The Gospel, while it faithfully reveals to us our ruined state as sinners, and our utter unworthiness of the least of God's mercies, graciously opens to our view the way to unspeakable [joy], through the incarnation and death of the eternal Son of God. Those who reject the Gospel, and choose the forbidden pleasures of sin, find the fruit of their choice to be bitterness and death; while those who cheerfully renounce the world, and yield themselves unto God through Jesus Christ, have a spring of holy joy opened in their souls, which shall flow onward, until it issues in everlasting life.

Oh! my soul, is this your experience? Do you feel this inward joy in a crucified Jesus? Are you leaning on the bosom of your Savior; resting on covenant faithfulness and unchanging love?”²

² <http://www.gracegems.org/BOOKS/cr64.htm>

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

On Joy by Thomas Reade

<http://www.gracegems.org/BOOKS/cr64.htm>

Spiritual Joy by Octavius Winslow

http://www.gracegems.org/2/spiritual_joy.htm

Peace to Those with Whom He's Pleased by John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/peace-to-those-with-whom-he-s-pleased>