

“Two Wonderful Things about Christmas: The Savior Himself and the Shepherds”

Luke 2:8-15

Sermon for Christmas Eve 2021

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

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Christmas truly is a wonderful time of the year. There are couple of things that come into view that are wonderful in what the angel told the shepherds: “A *Savior* has been born to you today in the City of David, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

So here is the first wonderful thing. It is Jesus Himself. The angel speaks of the birth of a Savior. The angel said three important things about this Savior. First, the Savior is the promised Son of King David. He will be greater than David because His reign is eternal. The tenure of His reign is “forever.” Yet, He is David’s son.

Second, this Savior is called Christ. This means that He is the anointed one. He is anointed by God with the Holy Spirit to be the revelation of God’s grace and mercy. He is anointed with the Spirit to be the One who wins redemption and victory over sin, death, and the Evil One.

How can He be this Savior? The answer is in the third thing the angel said about Him. He is the Lord. This child born of Mary is Lord over all things. He is Lord in the Biblical sense of “Lord.” It is as Isaiah says: “Unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6 NKJV). His name is “Mighty God.” His name is “Everlasting Father.” The little baby who was born that day is Lord over all things.

Yes, indeed, His name is Wonderful. And this is the wonder of all wonders, the grace of all graces, the Gift of all gifts. Yes, indeed, it is beyond human conception; beyond whatever could have possibly entered into the heart and mind of human beings. But Isaiah told us how this child would also be Lord: “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7 NKJV). It is the act of God Himself, a most wonderful act.

But this Child will also be Wonderful because as Mighty God and everlasting Father, as the Lord of all things, He will be Prince of Peace. The only place to find the peace that God wants to give is in this Prince, in finding Him as the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a feeding trough; that is, finding Him as He came in humility; where He has come in peace, making peace by the blood of His cross.

So, indeed, Christmas is wonderful because of Jesus Himself.

But here is another really important way that Christmas is wonderful. It is that the angel spoke the good news of the Savior to shepherds. The angel did not break the good news by telling it to the high and mighty. The angel told it to the shepherds, people just doing their jobs, not considered to be much according to the glories of this world and what impresses. But this means that the good news is for any one, for you and me; even for the high and mighty, if they too will also receive it in repentance and faith.

And as we think for a moment about the shepherds, let us learn from them one vitally important thing. After the angel appeared and the glory of the Lord shined brighter than the glory of the sun in the middle of the night; and after the angel was joined by a great multitude of the armies of heaven, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth good will toward human beings” (Luke 2:14); after all that, what did they do?

Did they glory in the appearance of angels? Did they try to keep the glory of that vision?

Did they think themselves especially blessed because angels appeared to them? No. They thought themselves blessed because of what the good news was. They said, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us” (Luke 2:15 NKJV).

Let us now go to Bethlehem. Let us go see this thing that is what the good news is all about. Their focus was on what they had been told. And they understood correctly who it is that had told them: The Lord had made it known to them.

And so they left the glory of the angels to find the wonder of Him who is Wonderful. They found the baby lying in a manger. They found the Wonder and joy of looking at the Lord whose glory was hidden in human flesh; who came to us in such humility, so they could approach and worship Him.

We cannot go to Bethlehem, not literally; and in fact, the baby grew up and became the Man, the Man who had a mission ahead of Him in Galilee. It was a mission that involved a rendezvous with a Roman cross. It was a mission that involved winning victory over all evil and death itself in leaving behind an empty tomb.

But we too are told from the Lord about this good news of the Savior born to us, as we hear it anew every year from the word of the Lord, and receive the good news of the Savior of the world, our Savior, in humility and faith.

Christmas is indeed wonderful. So we sing to the LORD [and] bless his name, [and] tell of his salvation from day to day.” (Psalm 96:2). Thanks be to God. Amen.