

**SERMON**  
**Light of the Angels**  
**Luke 2;**

How many of you have seen an angel?  
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?

Angelology is not a topic that got a lot of attention in seminary.

In the tradition that has its roots in the biblical theology of the Puritans, angels are not given much attention.

But in the Christmas narrative, they take center stage. Following 400 years of silence between Malachi to Matthew, we see a flurry of supernatural announcements from angels. These are heavenly messengers with a heavenly message.

In the fullness of time God is sending His son and He is doing so with messages from Angels not prophets.

Consider the swelling tide of angelic visits:

First to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist – Luke 1:11ff Gabriel, who stands before God, was sent to give him the news.

Next Gabriel goes to Mary to announce the coming of a child – Luke 1:26ff

Matt 1:20 an angel goes to counsel Joseph to take Mary as his wife

Luke 2:8 ff An angel goes to announce the of birth of Christ to the shepherds, and then he is joined by a multitude of heavenly hosts ( who may not be angels).

Matt 2:12 The magi are warned by God in a dream to not return to Herod.

Matt 2:13, an angel then warns Joseph to take Mary and the baby to Egypt –

At this epoch of the birth of Jesus, there is a flurry of angelic visitations to bring important messages.

From the beginning to end, Christianity is an Announcement of what God does for us, not what we do for God. This is especially seen in the narratives of the person of Christ – his conception, birth, baptism.

8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased."

15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."

In the PBS series "From Jesus to Christ" – their focus was on the development of how the church created the story of Jesus (not told from a perspective of faith even though they had a lot of folks from religious backgrounds). Perhaps I missed it, but what I didn't hear was a clear explanation of how the gospel is AN ANNOUNCEMENT, not simply a story.

The GOOD NEWS – the gospel – isn't a story we tell and then leave people to draw their own conclusions. It is an ANNOUNCEMENT of what God has done IN AND THROUGH Jesus.

The angels don't come telling a story or giving an update – they come as messengers of the heavenly King making a Proclamation of Salvation. The Royal Prince has been born who will save His people from their sins. The difference between this prince and the other royal births is that this Heavenly Prince is born in a lowly setting.

Think of the hymns we might sing at this time of year:

- Angels from the Realms of Glory
- It Came upon a Midnight Clear
- Angels We have heard on High
- The First Noel
- While Shepherds Watched their Flocks
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

To hear the hymn writers tell it, the angels had a lot to say about Christmas, and, biblically speaking, those hymn writers are right. You may not have realized it, but it is principally from angels – yes, angels – that we learn the significance of Jesus' birth.

The Advent season is a time to remember the good news brought by these heavenly messengers and to share in their joy at the birth of Jesus.

THREE KEY IDEAS:

1. Good news of great Joy Luke 2

**Luke 2:10** <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

There is something special about the birth of a child.

GWTW – Melanie, *"The happiest days are when babies are born."*

Before getting to the joy, the shepherds had to get past their fear – they were sore afraid.

Why? They saw an Angel – not an everyday occurrence. He tells them to 'fear not' and then gives the good news.

Then suddenly there appeared a multitude of heavenly hosts = AN ARMY

This had to be frightening. We usually think of the angels floating in the sky, but the first angel 'stood' and then they see an army of angels standing in front or around them.

The angels were 'evangelizing' the shepherds by telling them 'good news'

When we hear the term 'good news' we think about the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

What did the angels announce? THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR.

The shepherds had to realize that it would be a while before the Savior appeared to do his saving work. He was just a baby, but they rejoiced because they now had a future hope in FUTURE GRACE TO COME.

Their hope was rooted in the OT expectations of a deliverer, a Messiah to come. The promised anointed one is born this day!.

This is GOOD NEWS. Literally the angels said, "This is MEGA joy".

Who needs this JOY?

We all do.

We need a joy that is not based on circumstances.

It came upon a midnight clear...

3 And ye, beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way  
with painful steps and slow,  
look now! for glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing.  
O rest beside the weary road,  
and hear the angels sing!

Some of you may be feeling that way this morning – crushed by aging parents, job issues, health issues, a grown child who has walked from the faith, depression, addiction, singleness, divorce, messy relationships, etc,

If that is you, then Christmas is an invitation to rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing of Good news of Great Joy.

It is easy for the songs of the culture of despair to get stuck in our heads, so we need to put the song of the angels on stereo in our minds and hearts.

Unlike the shepherds, we don't have to imagine what the Savior will do or how he will save. We have the testimony of the gospels and the NT to tell us about Jesus. He has done above and beyond all that we could ask or think.

This is not just a hope for future grace. This is a hope and reality TODAY.

The people of Israel were needing Joy as they suffered under Rome.

The Gospel is the good news **that through Jesus' death and resurrection we can be**

- 1) **saved from the power of sin's ugly idolatry,**
- 2) **saved from the wrath of God, and**
- 3) **saved for the supreme enjoyment of God himself – God is with us**

Matthew gives a rundown of the genealogy of Jesus and in that list we find those who would need the joy of a redeemer. Those who lived before Christ and looked forward for a Messiah, those who lived at the time of Christ who were like sheep without a shepherd, and those who have lived after Christ need to know the joy of salvation – forgiveness of sin and deliverance from the penalty of sin.

Is the gospel a mega JOY for you?

Does it create in your soul a deep well of joy that gives you stability and a resource that can't be explained in any other way?

HOW DO WE experience this JOY?

By acknowledging our need for a Savior. Only sinners can know the joy of salvation.

Those who trust in their OWN efforts and their own righteousness will never know the Joy of a Savior announced by the angels.

## 2. **the birth announcements of the angels were sent to “all the people” (Luke 2:10)**

God shows no ethnic partiality in salvation.

God chose Abraham and his line to be the first to know His promises, after the promise of Gen 3, but the goal was to bless the nations through them.

Isa 9, 11

**This announcement is mysterious because it is announced that the Savior is for “all people”. This would include Gentiles.** How they are to be saved was always a mystery to the people of Israel. Paul discusses this in his letters.

**Ephesians 3:4-6** By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; <sup>6</sup> to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow

heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

God shows no socio-economic partiality in salvation. He saves women, men, slaves, free peoples, rich, poor, learned, unlearned, laborers and managers, etc.

No socio-economic condition excludes one from the saving work of God.

How do we respond to those who are different – socially, culturally, ethnically?

Remember Jonah who displeased God because he was upset that God would save the people of Ninevah. They deserved wrath, but God was gracious and that bothered Jonah.

It is all too easy to forget that our salvation is a miracle of GRACE.

### 3. those birth announcements spoke of Jesus' person and work.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-christ>

The angels or heavenly host could put on a great light show but they were not there to draw attention to themselves. They came to announce JESUS.

**He is a Savior, CHRIST THE LORD.**

Those words are loaded with meaning

Savior – Matt 1:21 An angel spoke to Joseph “Mary will bear a son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

The angel actually gives the child the name Jesus i.e. from Hebrew Joshua = Yahweh saves.

This “Joshua” will bring a deliverance and salvation greater than what Moses, Joshua and David did in the OT. They had delivered from earthly enemies, but Jesus delivers or save us from our sin. This is something only God can do.

There is no ultimate benefit from being saved from our enemies if we are still held captive by the power and penalty of sin – DEATH.

NOTE that Jesus is not merely an example to imitate; He is not a guru to show you the path to follow, He is the Savior. He is the way, the Truth, and the Life.

I SPENT 18 years going to church and engaged as a young person, getting Christmasie feelings singing carols and going to Christmas Eve services, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW Jesus AS SAVIOR. I merely saw Him as an example.

He is CHRIST THE LORD. Christ is NOT a last name. It is a title – “Anointed One” = “Messiah”

From the OT context, those anointed by God for a certain task could be called ‘christ’ or ‘messiah’.

Specifically, we see that prophets, priests, and kings would be anointed. This helps us to understand why biblical authors referred to Jesus as “the Christ” for he would serve in all three offices –

**Prophet- , in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.**

**Priest - , in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.**

**King - in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.**

Jesus is God in the flesh; He is God with a face. He is ‘God with Us.’

He is the hope for all who live in darkness, for all who are weary and heavy laden.

Christmas is a time for our hearts and minds to catch up with what we have in a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. It's a time for our hearts to catch up with what we sing.  
It is easy, even at Christmas, to fall into a mode of floating guilt thinking that God is out to get us. Accusations because of our old besetting sins are turned up louder in our heads than the Doxology of the Angels.

If angels are sent from heaven and they go from announcement to Doxology then we know that God has done something BIG. He has brought forgiveness as love comes down in Bethlehem.

Shalom from heaven i.e. Peace to those with whom He is pleased – HAS COME, today.

IS HE YOUR PEACE AND HOPE THIS MORNING?

Do you know Jesus as Savior, as the anointed one, as LORD?