The News of Christmas

Luke 2:8-20

Before there was google, television, newspapers, or radio, the way news travelled was by word of mouth.

Messengers would be sent from one place to another and announce the news to people.

As I was reading through the accounts of Christmas this year, my attention was drawn to the messengers of Christmas.

The day Jesus was born God sent some messengers to proclaim the news of His birth.

They announce a wondrous mystery and as we celebrate Christmas together I want to focus our attention on the news of Christmas.

[Turn in your bibles to **Luke 2:8-20.** In this text there are at least five lessons about the news of Christmas that we ought to take to heart. First…]

Point #1 – The news of Christmas is unexpected. (Verses 8-9)

Even though the LORD had promised the birth of Jesus throughout the Old Testament, no one was anticipating it happening quite like it did.

*In the dark and cold of a Middle Eastern evening this happens (**Verses 8-9).***

It is hard to imagine anyone picking a group of shepherds to be among the first ones to tell about the most important birth in the history of the world.

Shepherds, according to every commentary on read on this text, were a lowly and despised group of people at the time.

They had a reputation for stealing and because of their occupation they spent most of their lives being considered ceremonially unclean and therefore excluded from worship, which is somewhat ironic considering they were the ones who provided the lambs for sacrifices at the temple.

God choosing to announce the birth of his Son to these guys is unexpected.

To say that the shepherds themselves were caught off guard is an understatement for sure.

An angel, that is God's messenger from heaven, appears to them it says.

Now that would be enough of a surprise on its own, but look at what it says comes along with the angel.

It says, "…the glory of the LORD shone around them."

The glory of God, because it is a display of His absolute perfection, is dangerous to human beings because we are far from perfect.

You have lowly and despised sinners encountering the glory of God.

That is unexpected.

Almighty God often does things very differently from the way people do them.

The LORD says, "…my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD." (Isaiah 55:8)

God certainly shows that to be true the day Jesus is born by sending an angel to lowly shepherds.

Thankfully for the shepherds and for us the news of Christmas is something more than unexpected.

[The surprise of the visit causes the shepherds to be "terrified" it says at the end of verse 9. That is the normal and unavoidable reaction to such a sight. Courage and pride vanish in the presence of even the mere reflection of the majesty of God Almighty. Thankfully for the shepherds and for us the news of Christmas is more than unexpected, we also see here that…]

Point #2 – The news of Christmas is good. (Verses 10-14)

Because the Son of God took on humanity those that believe are rescued instead of lost.

With the shepherds shaking in their sandals, we read this in ***verse 10.***

The angel has not come to strike them down or pronounce God's judgment, he has come to bring "good news of great joy."

This news it says, "…will be for all the people" meaning the people of God.

What is the good news? **Verses 11-12.**

The good news is that "A Saviour has been born to you!"

That is only good news if you understand your need of being rescued.

The Bible says that each and every one of us is under the wrath of almighty God because we have broken His laws and have failed to give Him his proper place in our lives.

The Bible tells us that God is just and so He is obligated to see that there are consequences for our disobedience.

The Bible also says, there is nothing we can do to erase our mistakes, there is nothing we can do to rescue ourselves from God's eternal judgement.

We need a Saviour and the good news of Christmas is One "has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

Christ is a title, it means "anointed one".

That is this baby that has been born has been chosen by God to be the Saviour.

He is also LORD. This little baby is the ruler of all creation. There is no power or throne that is higher than His.

This means that He will save His people and no power in the universe can keep Him from accomplishing what He is determined to do.

That is good news worthy of what it says in **verses 13-14.**

The good news of Christmas is all about the glory of God.

Christmas happens because of His power.

Christmas happens because of His grace.

No one else can do what He has done.

Every angel in heaven knows it and the shepherds hear a great multitude of them say it.

[Everyone who knows Jesus as their Saviour and Lord (you can't have one without the other) has the joy of being able to join in with the angelic celebration precisely because the news of Christmas is good. Here is a third lesson about the news of Christmas…]

Point #3 – The news of Christmas is true. (Verses 15-16)

Jesus' birth is a historical event that can never be undone.

*Amazingly the shepherds are able to still speak after they see what they have seen (**Verse 15).***

One of the many things I appreciate about the Scriptures is the emphasis on eye witness accounts.

The way the bible is written makes it impossible to equate it with mythology and legend.

It makes it impossible to chalk up was is written with wishful thinking, mere dreams, or hallucinations.

The Bible leaves us with only two possibilities, either it is written by reliable and trustworthy sources or by liars.

We are not told how many shepherds there are, but there is more than one.

They all see, hear, and feel the same things as a result of their encounter with the angels.

What is their response? To go and investigate! "Let's go and see it."

The angel tells them in verse 12 that the sign that they will know the baby by is that he will be "wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger"

For a baby to be swaddled would be a very common thing, but lying in a manger that would be an unusual circumstance.

Mangers were feeding troughs for animals not cradles for babies.

Now look at what it says in **verse 16.**

They find it exactly like they were told. Why? Because it actually happened, because it is true.

God, according to His sovereign will, orchestrated the most unlikely of circumstances in bringing His One and Only Son into the world.

One of the reasons He does that is to show the truth of it all.

If the news of Christmas were anything other than a proclamation of God then we would never have heard of it.

Jesus is born to a poor family, in a back water town, in a back water country.

He had no army, He had no social standing or privilege, If He did write something by His own hand it has not been preserved, those that He entrusted His legacy to were mostly uneducated people of no standing, God chose people like lowly shepherds who had bad reputations to be his witnesses, and on and on we could go.

God purposely uses people and situations that have no earthly chance of working and He makes them work beyond what we can even appreciate.

[No one has changed the world more than Jesus Christ. How is that possible with such unlikely circumstances? It is possible because it's true. The only reason any of us celebrate Christmas or even know the name Jesus is because the news of Christmas is true. Here is a fourth lesson…]

Point #4 – The news of Christmas is worth sharing. (Verses 17-18)

There is nothing better or more important to talk about than the miracle of the person of Jesus.

Verses 17-18 *tell us what the shepherds do after they had seen Jesus in the manger, listen to what we are told.*

Hard to say exactly who they told or how many, but what is clear is that they told people about what they had experienced.

It is not every day that God sends an angel to tell people some stuff.

It is not every day a person gets to hear the most important news in the history of the world.

They no doubt had an eager audience as well.

Most people living in the nation of Israel at the time were looking forward to a Saviour.

They had been living under the oppression of Rome for a long time.

In fact, the reason Jesus ended up being born in Bethlehem, like the Scriptures had predicted hundreds of years before, was because the emperor of Rome was implementing a census in order to tax them.

How much the people truly understood of what was said is hard to say.

How much the shepherds themselves really appreciated about the news they were spreading is also uncertain.

They did know enough to know it was worth talking about, and the news was certainly worthy of being amazed by.

The same is still true for us today, perhaps even more so.

If you are a Christian this morning, then by God's grace you understand that the news of Christmas is true, and you and I also have the benefit of having the rest of the story.

We know that Christ came into the world to save people from the greatest enemies of all, the enemies of sin and death.

We know and believe that Jesus can be our Saviour because He lived a perfect life and died to pay the consequences of our evil and make us right with God.

We know that He was raised from the dead, the He is reigning in heaven, and that He will give eternal life to everyone who belongs to Him.

All of that happens because of the news of Christmas.

[It's true that the world today does not seem overly eager or interested to hear the news of Christmas, but that doesn't change the fact that it is worth sharing. This is the most amazing news ever. It is the news of God doing the unexpected, it is good news, it is true, it is worth sharing, and lastly…]

Point #5 – The news of Christmas should cause reflection and worship. (Verses 19-20)

The more we know about who Jesus is, the more His birth should captivate our minds and command the affections of our hearts.

*We see the news of Christmas causes some reflection in Jesus' mother (**Verses 19).***

What the NIV translates as 'treasured' has the sense of guarding, protecting, or keeping safe.

Mary clearly has the closest and most personal experience with the work of God on that first Christmas.

Roughly nine months earlier she had her own visit from an angel, Gabriel, who told her that Jesus would be conceived through a miracle.

She had likely endured hardship and shame during her pregnancy.

She had been comforted and encouraged by her cousin Elizabeth.

She had seen the LORD change her husband's heart and they both had experienced God's provision up to and including the night the child was born.

After meeting and hearing from the shepherds we are told of her resolve to keep all these things in her heart.

That is important to keep the truth of Christmas well-guarded in our hearts, but she does something else as well. She ponders them.

I am fully convinced that the news of Christmas is the greatest of all mysteries in the Christian faith.

God the Son, infinite and perfect in all His ways, took on humanity with all of its limitations without giving up an ounce of His divinity.

It would be easier to fit the ocean into a single glass without reducing the volume of the ocean than it would be to accomplish what God does in the person of Christ, this helpless babe lying in a manger in Bethlehem.

That brothers and sisters is worth some of our brain power.

We need to guard and think about the news of Christmas, but we also need to follow the example of the Shepherds in **verse 20.**

They are many people who ignore and reject the news of Christmas, but that does not change the fact that these things happened just as we have been told.

One of the great benefits to pondering the incompressible reality of Christmas is it produces awe in our hearts which leads to worship.

How can we say anything less than, "Glory to God in the highest!"?

How can we make it through a Christmas celebration and reduce it to turkey and presents?

Those things are good, but they are far from the heart of Christmas.

Christmas happens so that we can worship God forever.

This is the news of Christmas.

It is unexpected, it is good, it is true, it is worth sharing, and it demands our worship.