

## **12-10-23 (Second Sunday in Advent)**

Sermon- The Angels Brought Joy

Scripture- Luke 1:26-55, CTW Ps 85:1-2, 8-13

Hymns- 164, 198, 157

Theme- The angel appears to Mary and in one short conversation, rocks her world with incredible news. With joy for God's providence in her life, she responds in the affirmative with a song for the ages!

### **I. Introduction: To Be On A Journey to Joy**

Today we look at the scene in Luke where Mary was told of God's plan for her to bear the Christ child. In that passage we were introduced to Mary - a young girl who is shown as prayerful, generous, caring, thankful and humble. She's just the kind of girl you'd expect God to choose for mother of Jesus.

**A. And then we are also introduced to an Angel.** A blaze of light – a powerful creature. A little scary – but still a force from God with a message of hope.

This one incident (this angel appearing to Mary) set in motion a journey. A journey that was going to change the world. A Journey would take Joseph and Mary to a little town called Bethlehem. And there, the Christ child would be born, and the heavenly star would appear, and the shepherds, and eventually the Wise men, would come worship.

### **B. This journey of Mary and Joseph's would be a journey toward Joy.**

Now sometimes we Christians don't realize how significant that journey was for them because, well... that's all history to us. For us, Jesus is already born, He's already lived and He's already died and risen from dead. All that happened before we were even born...it's history. We always need to remember however, that the word "history" for Christians really means HIS STORY!

Of course back then none of that had happened yet. No one seemed to suspect how God was going to do what He was going to do, but it seemed that everybody knew for certain that God **was going to send... somebody!**

That fact was repeated all thru the Old Testament: "Somebody's coming... somebody's coming. And when that somebody arrived, **He** was going to change their lives forever. The prophecies declared what that somebody would **DO**, and what He'd **SAY**.

And the prophecies also told **TO WHOM** He'd be born. Did you notice how puzzled Mary was? Why was she puzzled with the Angel's message? Why? Because she's just been told she's going to have a child and she'd never slept with a man. She was a virgin. That's not supposed to happen. That's not the way things worked.

But that's exactly what the prophecy in **Isaiah 7:14** had said would occur:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, (which means "God with us!").

But how could that happen? How could a Virgin possibly give birth to a child? And when Mary asks that very obvious question the angel replies "... nothing will be impossible with God." **Luke 1:37**. (Good words for all of us to live by!)

(PAUSE) So Mary's told- that in spite of the fact she's a virgin - she's going to have a child... she gets all excited about it!!! I can picture her saying to her friends: "Folks, you are **never** going to believe this one!"

I understand people getting excited about the birth of a child, but why should anybody get THIS excited about the birth of THIS child? What is it about this child that would justify anybody - not only getting excited - but placing their **hope** in Him? Well, it ALL has to do with the things the angel said to Mary about this child.

## **II. The Angels are Sent to Make Declarations for God.**

The first thing we're going to look at is the angel's declaration that: "...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." **Luke 1:32b**

**A. The angel was simply echoing the promise from Isaiah 9:7** "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and THE GOVERNMENT shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT and of peace there will be no end, ON THE THRONE OF DAVID and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."

You see, this child that Mary was to bear was going to be a King. He was going to be our King. And His reign and kingdom would last forever ... there'd be no end to it!

Now, that's interesting. but what does that mean to US? Why should we care that Jesus was to be our King?

ILLUS: Americans are political people. I don't know if you've noticed, but politics is in the news a LOT these days. And everybody seems to be mad at everybody else. We tend to think that this is a new development in our days... but it's not. It's been like that ever since the beginning of our nation.

I remember reading once in history about one member of the House of Representatives who went into the Senate and nearly beat one senator to death. As bad as politics are today, we haven't quite gotten that far yet.

The word "**Benevolent**" means that the person is kindly, compassionate, caring. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary says that:

“Someone who is "benevolent" genuinely wishes other people well.”

**B. And that’s how Scripture portrays Jesus - Jesus is a BENEVOLENT King.** Jesus is a King that genuinely wants to help us. **Hebrews 4:15** says of Jesus “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

In other words: Jesus has been there and done that. He’s God become flesh and has tasted of the harshness of the life we live. He knows how hard it is to be who we are. He knows the struggles and frustrations and temptations of life. He’s been tempted as we have... but He NEVER sinned. And because He knows what our lives are like He can sympathize with our weaknesses.

**So First** – Jesus is our King (when we became Christians) and He is a benevolent King who wants what is best for us. That’s His primary objective for us.

**III. SECONDLY the angel said: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High...” Luke 1:32a**

Why should that matter to us? Well, it matters because it means He not only WANTS what is best for us but He has the POWER to make it happen.

**A. He is the SON of the MOST HIGH.** This speaks to Jesus’ **DIVINITY** - to His being God. In fact, the phrase in **Isaiah 9** that we read earlier declared that He is the “**Mighty God**”. And one of the names for Jesus is Immanuel. “**Immanuel**”: means – “**God With Us.**”

When the Gospel of John starts out it describes Jesus as “**The Word**” - “In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word** was with God, and **THE WORD WAS GOD**. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of

men... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." **John 1:1-4 and 14.**

**The Word became flesh.** The Word became the Son of the Most High. And that Word WAS God – God in the flesh. Jesus was God with us. And that's pretty much **the consistent teaching** throughout the New Testament.

**B. But here's the deal: Because Jesus IS God in the flesh.. He has the POWER to make a difference in our lives.**

And why is it important? Well it's important because **Knowing** that Jesus has the **POWER**... I can relax. I don't have to sweat anything. Jesus has the power to do whatever needs to be done in my life. That doesn't mean he'll necessarily do what I WANT done, but He will do what NEEDS to be done in my life.

**I know** that if I live on this earth, **bad things** are going to happen. Nothing I have on this earth is going to last.

As Jesus said: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal" (**Matthew 6:19**). Everything I call my own is going to rust, decay, get lost or stolen... or die.

And I know that while I live on this earth I'm going to get hurt, and I'm going to get sick, and (**unless Jesus comes first**) I'm even going to die. And you're going to die too.

But even in the midst of the harshest things that can happen to me in this life I know that Jesus will be there WITH me. He'll never leave me nor forsake me. And when I die, I know He'll carry me safely over to the other side to live with Him in heaven forever.

As Paul wrote: "I can do all things through Christ who empowers me." (**Philippians 4:13**) I can HANDLE all things thru Christ who

gives me strength! And that gives me the power to live life through my faith.

**IV. And finally, the angel said to Mary "...you will conceive in your womb... and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus."** (God with US) (**Luke 1:31**). This is perhaps THE most important thing that Gabriel told her that day.

The name Jesus means "Savior". But what's He going to save us from? Our sins! The Gospel of Matthew tells us that a little later - when Gabriel visited Joseph - Joseph is told Mary is going to have a child and the angel says "you shall call his name Jesus, for he will SAVE his people from their sins." **Matthew 1:21**.

**A. A lot of people look at Christmas as the most important season of the year.** I read recently that merchants make over 60% their yearly income from Christmas sales And people (especially merchants) count the days until Christmas comes.

Last year right after Christmas, I saw a sign at Walmart that declared "Only 365 days until Christmas."

There's a comic strip called "Family Circus" that looks at life and faith) thru the eyes of children. In one of their comic strips a 5 year old named Dolly holds up the baby Jesus from a Nativity scene and declares: "Here's the Star of Bethlehem."

But in another insightful cartoon Dolly's mother is holding a crucifix and Dolly says "I liked seeing Jesus in the Manger better."

(Pause) **Really?** Why would Dolly prefer the Child in the manger to Christ on the cross? Well, because babies in their cribs are cuddly and innocent and approachable. **Jesus on the cross...? not so much.**

**B. On the cross we have nothing but sorrow and pain... and loneliness.** That doesn't appeal so much to children.

But that's why Jesus came to begin with. Without the Cross, the manger is just a cute little story with no real hope. Without the cross there's no forgiveness of sins.

ILLUS: I visited with a woman not long ago who told me that it was hard for her to believe God loved her. She said she messed up so much and sinned so much in her life that she couldn't imagine Him wanting her.

And I can identify with that. There's been times I've been by myself – maybe in the kitchen or in the shower – and I remember something I've said, or something I've done, or something I've thought - that makes me feel very bad about myself. And at that moment the shame of that memory washes over me as I realize how stupid I'd been.

**Have you ever felt that way? Sure you have.**

But then the woman I visited said that the one thing that gave her comfort was the knowledge that God had sent His Son to take all her sins away. God so loved her that He gave His only begotten Son so that her sins could be covered by Jesus' blood. It's a tangible thing she could feel in her soul.

**V. So, Is the Christmas Message a Distraction?**

There are preachers who don't like preaching about Christmas. They don't preach on the manger and the stories related to it because they think this Christmas thing distracts from the real message of Christ – the cross and the empty tomb.

And they have a right to do that... but I think they've missed something...

**A. Two of the Gospels not only tell the story of the baby Jesus, but they spend a lot of time introducing us to people who worshipped Him.**

There are FOUR CHAPTERS in those Gospels that dwell on Jesus' birth. Why? Why would God waste that much ink and paper on Jesus' birth?

Well, because that's how God wanted to introduce Jesus to us. God wanted us to see Him as a baby... helpless, vulnerable, and loving.

ILLUS: Have you ever noticed what happens when a family brings a baby to church? What happens? Everybody flocks to that child. Everybody wants to hold the baby and make cute little noises and contort their faces to make the child smile. Everybody seems to make fools of themselves around these babies.

**B. Why? Because there is JOY! There's something comforting about a child.** Babies aren't intimidating. They don't threaten us. They make us feel good about ourselves. They give us **JOY!**

And that's the beauty of the Gospels telling of Mary giving birth to a baby boy.

That's why the story of Jesus **BEGAN** with His being a little child - because in that baby in a manger, we begin seeing Jesus as someone who is gentle and would accept us as we are. And for centuries that's been the joyful message and the power of the Advent story.

Amen? Let us pray...