Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (#277)

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20

Sermon Title: Heed the announcement of salvation

Sermon Text: Luke 2:8-14

Main Idea: Receive the gift of peace and great joy given to us through the Savior, Christ the Lord

Take Comfort in the Herald Angels

Worship the Savior Christ, Christ the Everlasting Lord

Receive the gift of Peace

So what ...
Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconcile.
Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim
'Christ is born in Bethlehem'
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King.

Christ by highest heaven adored
Christ the everlasting Lord
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail, the incarnate deity,
Pleased as Man with Man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King.

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Son of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King.
Heralds of Joy: Good News For Bad Times

Introduction

For centuries people have celebrated Christmas around the world. Almost every nation celebrate Christmas. In different regions of the world there are different traditions, favorite foods, colorful costumes, and lighted decorations.

And what is it that we are celebrating? Christmas is the time we celebrate Immanuel, which means God with us.

Christmas is when we celebrate God dwelling on earth; breathing, walking, and living in the form of a man to bring salvation to us all.

As we journey in our culture, we see Christmas in theater productions, paintings, outdoor displays, and in music. I am not much of a musical person, but I really enjoy the words in Christmas hymns.

During our next four times we come together to worship, we will be looking at four traditional songs inspired by the story of Christmas. The four hymns are known throughout the world:

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing; Joy to the World; What Child Is This?; and O Come, All Ye Faithful.

The words of these hymns have been written by people who have been filled with the grace of God. The writers have put their faith in salvation that comes from Christ alone. They were so moved by the love of God that they sat down and penned these great and beautiful songs that we may enjoy today. The great thing about music is we get to share in this experience, the melody and the words, we may sing together with people from many cultures.

Each song represents a truth about Christ. We will look at how the Scripture reveals that particular truth.

Millions of people have sung these songs. Many people know the words and could join in when the tune begins to play.

We might hear these songs played as we are shopping in a department store, on the radio while driving around town, at a friend’s home; or even at our workplace.

But, here is what is most amazing. Any other time of the year, if we were to hear these lyrics in our culture, as we shop, on secular radio, or other areas, we would stop in our tracks and say, “what did they just sing?”

“Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her king, let every heart prepare him room”

“Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord”

Songs like this don’t make it to the airwaves. People would line up in protest if they knew these songs were played on the radio by the city hall employee. This is a culture that has just about outlawed Christianity. People have to say “happy holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas” and people get in an uproar over nativity scenes in public squares.

Yet, I can knock on my neighbor’s door with a group of people and we can sing,
Heralds of Joy: Good News For Bad Times

Sermon Text: Luke 2:8-14

_Hark! the herald angels sing_  
_Glory to the newborn King_  
_Peace on earth and mercy mild_  
_God and sinners reconcile._

And our neighbor will offer us hot cocoa.

This week I watched a video of a flash mob singing out, “Go tell it on the mountains that Jesus Christ is Lord” and everyone in the mall is smiling, clapping and singing along.

This is what is so amazingly wonderful about these songs and about this time of year. God is allowing the truth of His Son to be revealed.

The song this morning is, “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” and the passage of Scripture is from the book of Luke, chapter 2.

**Main Idea:** Receive the gift of peace and great joy given to us through the Savior, Christ the Lord

**Take Comfort in the Herald Angels**  
_Luke 2:8-14_  

_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;

The angel of the Lord appeared at nighttime. He appeared to shepherds who were watching the flock by night. We don’t know much about these shepherds. We don’t know how many there were and we don’t know their names.

People who know the culture of the people from this time in history tell us they were likely young men because it was not an enviable job to watch the sheep at nighttime. It was the night shift. The important shepherds were asleep. These shepherds had to protect the sheep from nighttime predators. They were keeping watch for fox and other animals and perhaps also watching out for thieves who may want to steal the sheep.

They may have been expecting a wild animal, but it is very unlikely they were expecting an angel of the Lord. Imagine watching the sheep with your fellow shepherds and an angel appears. Not only does an angel appear, but Scripture tells us the “glory of the Lord shone around them.”

They were terribly frightened. Anybody would be frightened. What an incredible sight. Why would this angel appear? What was his intention?

The angel of the Lord immediately gave them comfort. “Do not be afraid.” If I was one of the shepherds, I imagine this is exactly what I would want to hear, “do not be afraid.”
Then, the angel of the Lord makes an incredible proclamation. “I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.”

What comfort the shepherds must have had to hear these words.

We also can take great comfort in these words.

The God of the Universe sent an angel to shepherds who were keeping watch at night to have them tell the world that there is good news of great joy for all people. This proclamation is made for all people; you and me.

We need not be afraid, God is declaring good news of great joy. Take comfort in the herald angels.

The proclamation did more than declare good news of great joy. The proclamation tells us more. The proclamation tell us to Worship Christ the everlasting Lord.

Worship our Savior, Christ the Lord

The angel of the Lord gave reason why the shepherds, and all the people, should consider the proclamation as being news of great joy.

The reason for the joy is somebody was born.

Luke 2:11-12 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.”

About 700 years earlier, Micah prophesied the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

Now, the angel of the Lord was telling the shepherds this had taken place.

They were told they would find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger.

Not many babies are born in mangers. He should be easy to find, especially for shepherds, who kept sheep and probably know where the mangers are located in Bethlehem.

What was more important about the announcement was not where to find this baby, but who this baby is. Three titles are given for this baby: savior, Christ, and Lord. This is the reason for the good news.

Jesus is savior

Jesus came to save people.

Jesus is a descendent of the Israel patriarch Abraham, and God told Abraham through him, all the nations would be blessed. Jesus the savior is a fulfillment of that prophecy.

He came to save people from their sins. People need a savior. People need to be rescued from their sin nature. Sin is breaking God’s laws. All people are guilty of breaking God’s laws and all people need to be saved from their sin.
Shepherds would understand this need. Under the Law of Moses, animal blood sacrifices were made in the Temple. Shepherds would give their animals to the priest on a regular basis.

We don’t know what the shepherds understood at the time about Jesus being Savior, but we know after visiting the manger, they gave glory to God for all that they heard. It is good news to hear a savior for people was born.

We also should rejoice about this news, Jesus is savior.

**Jesus is the Christ**

The angel of the Lord announced the baby was the Christ. Christ is a title given to the long-awaited messiah who was to be the King of the Jews, the anointed one.

Today, the followers of Christ take this title as their identity. We are known as Christians.

Jesus is often called, Jesus Christ, which may lead some to think Christ is his last name. He is properly known as Jesus the Christ, or Christ Jesus.

The Jewish prophecy about Christ taught that He was God. As the phrase in the song Hark the Herald Angels sing says,

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Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail, the incarnate deity,
Pleased as Man with Man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
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Jesus is God, veiled “clothed” in flesh. He is the Godhead. God covered in human flesh.

Hail, welcome, the incarnate (in person), deity. He was pleased to be a man. He is Immanuel. God with us.

What great news. God being born as a baby in the city of David.

This was also a sign for the shepherds. Every Jew who was looking for the Christ, the messiah, understood the prophecy given that the Christ was to be born in the city of David, in Bethlehem.

**Jesus is Lord**

The angel declared Jesus as “Kurios” which means to be supreme in authority. It means the baby born in Bethlehem was destined to be ruler over all things.

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Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King
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We are all familiar with the story of the wise men bringing gifts to the newborn king. A prophecy written by Solomon, said this about Jesus:

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Psalm 72:10-11  Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.  11 And let all kings bow down before him, (and) All nations serve him.
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This is why when King Herod heard Jesus, the King of the Jews, had been born he sent servants to kill all the male children in the region of Bethlehem who were of the age two and under. Herod doesn’t want anybody to be his master. Herod wanted to be the only king. He didn’t want to bend his knee to anyone.

When he was dying, above His head, Pilate had the inscription placed, “King of the Jews.”

God has made Jesus the King. God has all authority and God has made Jesus King of kings and Lord of Lords. Every knee shall one day bow before the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Today, in this world, there are still people who refuse to bow their knee to Jesus.

Because Jesus is Lord, we are to obey His commands. Those who receive Jesus as their Savior, who call themselves Christians, also call Jesus their Lord.

Yes, Christianity is about having a personal relationship with Jesus, but let us be sure we get the relationship right. Those who don’t see Jesus as their Lord don’t know Jesus.

Jesus is Savior. Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Messiah, and Jesus is Lord. The proper response for us is to worship our savior Christ the Lord

**Receive the gift of Peace**

The announcement tells us who was born, Christ the Lord, and the announcement tells us about his ministry! Jesus ministry is a ministry bringing the gift of peace to mankind.

A multitude of angels appeared with the angel of the Lord and they were praising God before the shepherds. Imagine all of these heavenly angels appearing and bursting forth in praise.

**Luke 2:14** 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

Peace on among men. What an incredible proclamation. Another prophecy about the Christ said He would bring peace to the world.

**Isaiah 9:6** 6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

What kind of peace were the heavenly hosts proclaiming? Peace everywhere, among all men? Peace in Ferguson Missouri? Peace on the streets of the Middle East? Peace in Jerusalem and the Gaza strip? In Afghanistan? Peace wherever there is conflict among men? Is this the peace the angels were proclaiming?

This is not the peace the angels were proclaiming. The angels were proclaiming peace between God and man.

You see, God is offering us peace. Peace with God. Even though we have offended God with our sin, God is offering forgiveness and a peace that is everlasting.
One day, God will pour out His anger and punishment upon mankind. God is not pleased with mankind. Mankind has turned their back upon God. Mankind is unthankful. Mankind is self-centered and disobeys God’s commands to be loving, trustworthy, generous, pure, kind, and at peace with one another. We all can think of ways mankind has disobeyed God. Most importantly, mankind has not worshiped God as they should.

God is loving, compassionate, and willing to forgive sin. However, this forgiveness is not just automatically given to all of mankind. Notice, there is a qualifying statement, “peace with whom He (God) is pleased.”

Who pleases God? None of us have lived a sinless life that is pleasing to God. So, who qualifies to receive this gift of peace with Him? Those who are qualified are those who put their faith in Jesus Christ; the one born in the city of David, and the ones the shepherds saw, the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

The Bible says without faith, it is impossible to please God. This is only one way for mankind to be pleasing to God and that is by putting their faith in Jesus Christ.

**So What ...**

So what, what does this announcement have to do with our life today? 2000 years ago angels appeared to shepherds and announced the birth of a baby in a nearby manger. So what? Should this effect our life in any way?

We know how the Shepherds responded to this great announcement by the angels. The shepherds praised God and gave him glory.

*Luke 2 15-20*  
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.” 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

So what? So what is your response?

**Main Idea:** Receive the gift of peace and great joy given to us through the Savior, Christ the Lord

**Unsaved**

If you are here this morning and you have never put your faith in Christ, will you do that today? Will you give God glory?

There is nothing you need to do to earn God’s favor, except to believe in the salvation found in Christ alone. You don’t have earn salvation, it may not be purchased in department stores, there are no advertisements
for salvation on television, salvation is a gift from God. Salvation is by grace, a gift. Like any gift you receive, all you have to do is receive it and thank God.

Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Will you do that? Will you be born again? Born in flesh the first birth, born spiritually the second birth.

Will you receive the **gift of peace and great joy**?

**Saved**
If you are here this morning, and you have put your faith in Jesus Christ the Lord, you may take great joy in knowing the great proclamation by the multitude of angels was not just for the shepherds in the field, but it was for you as well.

You can sing the song, Hark the Herald Angels Sing with great joy. In this world today, there are people who are needing to hear this good news. 2000 years ago, God sent a multitude of angels to proclaim the good news of great joy. Today, God is sending you and I to proclaim the birth of Christ the Lord and peace on earth. Will you share this news with the world?

Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim
'Christ is born in Bethlehem'

Today, join with the angelic host and let people know, Christ is born in Bethlehem. Christ the Savior and Lord.

**Prayer**
Lord God, let us be in continual amazement at how You sent angels to shepherds to proclaim the birth of our Lord and Savior. Cause those who have never received the gift of peace to bend their knee to Christ as their Lord and receive peace and a second birth.

**Communion**