

Why Angels Rejoice, Part 2

Luke 2:8-14

Look at Luke 1:30 and follow along just a few verses there. Luke 1:30, "The angel said to Mary, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. 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.' Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be since I'm a virgin?' The angel answered her. 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.'"

I want to show you six facts that they deliver here in this Christmas message, this message that the angel rejoices to share with the shepherds and it's all about Jesus Christ. Look at it there in verse 11. First, God's son was born, God's son was born. This is an unparalleled, unprecedented, non-repeatable

event. This is the incomprehensible, unexplainable paradox of the incarnation of the Son of God. It is that the invisible God has made himself visible in Jesus Christ. How does that work? Invisible, being visible. Does that not make the invisible now visible and no longer invisible? No. That's the mystery of the Trinity, right?

He has already existed as the eternal God, the second person of the Trinity, since before time began. As it says in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things were made through him without him was not anything made that has been made." That is, if it's in the category of made, of created, it's not him. He is the Creator. Yet here he enters his own creation, in the form of a little baby boy. He came into the world like every other man or woman since Adam and Eve, he came through the womb, which makes him fully human.

Why is that important? Because this Savior, who is Christ the Lord needed to be not only fully God, so he could have the eternal, infinite nature to absorb all the full infinite wrath of God, but he also had to be fully man, fully man to fully

represent us in our sinfulness. He's the one sent to reconcile God to man, which he does by uniting man to God in his own person.

First of all, receiving all of our just punishment, but second of all, transferring to us all of his perfect righteousness. It's a glorious mystery. Really is beyond our full comprehension, to understand this, but it is the message of Christmas that we believe, we find salvation, we find great joy. Second fact here, is that God's son is born this day, henceforth known to us as Christmas Day. That is to say, it came at a certain point in time, as Paul says, in Galatians, "born in the fullness of time, born of a woman." So secondly, God's son is born this day.

Third, God's son is born in the city of David, which is Bethlehem. So he's born at a particular time, and in a particular place. And when the shepherds in verse 15, said, hey, let's go see, you know what, they were only able to do that because of, he was born in a particular time, and in a

particular place. They were able to enter an actual town at that very moment, and see an actual human child.

So the incarnation of the Son of God is a historical reality. It's not in the category of myth, or fairy tale. Like every other world religion is based on, built on fairy tale and myth. This is rooted in fact. In history. It's an actual event, that's marked on a calendar, that's located on the map. This is real history folks, actual facts. Which are the basis of our faith in the Savior, who was born on Christmas Day.

Number four, God's son is born as a savior. He's born as a savior, which not only points again to the danger that we're in, we're sinners condemned before a holy God, but much more encouragingly, this also indicates the grace of God, his tender mercy toward us. The fact that there is a savior implies we need to be saved from something. But the fact that there is a savior implies that God intends to save us from something. That's good news, isn't it?

As we said the shepherds they were innately, acutely aware of their danger. The fact of their sinfulness in the presence of a holy angel, they knew they needed to be saved from God's judgment. They knew God's judgment toward them and their sin was just. As does every single one of us folks. The angel rejoiced to announce that God had made provision for them in this child, with his birth. That is the message of Christmas.

Fifth, God's son is born as the Christ. He's born as the anointed one, he's born as the Messiah. That is to say, this is no ordinary baby. He's the promise king of Israel. He is the one who will usher in the restoration of their nation. He is the one who will reign and rule on the throne of his father, David. This Christ is the one before whom the entire world will bow and pay homage, King of kings and Lord of lords. He commands the allegiance of everyone, kings and kingdoms. Ruling them with a rod of iron. Significance of this good news of great joy, full humanity, fulfilled prophecy, historic reality, tender mercy, messianic prophecy.

And finally, the six point here God's Son is the Lord. The Lord, don't miss the significance of that term, Lord. It is the

glory of the Lord that appeared to the shepherds, verse 9. The shepherds in verse 15 acknowledged that the Lord is the one who'd revealed himself to them. And here, it's the Savior who is, equals the Lord. He is the Lord. There's an emphasis here on the Savior's divinity and his sovereignty. Folks, this is no ordinary man. What started with normal humanity has escalated here and each subsequent term to reveal his full divinity. Absolutely remarkable.

From an angelic perspective, this is no surprise to them, the surprise to them is, his humanity. They've seen his divinity. They have worshiped in the presence of the son, the second person of the Trinity, ever since the day that they were created by Him. They witnessed God's Son create the entire world, Hebrews 1:2. As Paul wrote and Colossians 1:16, "By him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." What are the invisible beings that God created, Christ created? The angels.

For instance, "whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authority, all things were created through him and for him." So after the Son of God created the angels, they watched Him

command the rest of creation to existence. They were there when he "sunk the bases of the earth," Job 38:6, "and laid its cornerstone," and they erupted in praise. It says there, that "the morning stars," that's a reference to the angels. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Prior to his incarnation, the angelic host had known the qualities of God's Son for more than 4,000 years. They had witnessed his special creation of mankind, their special purpose as image bearers of God, his special relationship with them, they'd watched all of that.

They'd watched in sadness and in sorrow as their humanity fell in Adam and Eve, their rebellion against him the one they loved with a, with a holy, perfect, sinless love, they watched humanity turn on him. The one they entrusted implicitly, unfaithfully, they watched as mankind departed in unbelief, left the garden, took on the curse, entered into a cursed existence. But now with the incarnation of God's Son, born this day in the city of David, there witnessing yet another wonder of God, a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

And that's why Isaiah 9:6, as Paul read earlier, "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, and also the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." No wonder the angels were rejoicing. This is the more, most glorious news that's ever been announced on the earth or ever will be. The angels had the joy of putting the sword of judgment back in its sheath, and instead coming down to these shepherds to tell them this good news of great joy. Sharing with these sinful shepherds, fear not, I bring you good tidings of great joy. I want to share with you, my lord. That's their joy.

They rejoiced in sharing with shepherds, with all of humanity, with us as well today. The Son of God whom they've known, whom they loved. That's the joy of Christmas, isn't it? Let's consider a third reason the angels rejoice. Number three, angels rejoice at the salvation of God's people. The salvation of God's people. We've already seen it read in the text several times. None of this evangelical news would really matter to us, if it weren't for the advantage that God intended for his people.



Look at verse 10 again, because it's very clear, there, "The angel said to them, 'Fear not for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for," whom, "all the people.'" And then in the beginning of verse 11, "For unto you is born a savior." Listen, this proclamation of "good news of great joy." It's not just for the privileged and the powerful. It's not for all rich people. It's not for all the politicians, it's not for all the people, "might makes right," and they can roll over anybody. It's not about their stock going up. It's for all the people, rich and poor, small and great, white Collar, blue collar, all kinds of collars; everybody, shepherds, princes, all kinds of people.

For these Bethlehem shepherds counted as nobodies in that day, they really were. Shepherds were almost a despised people. It was God's special grace to send the angels to them. And the angels in particular rejoice to tell them, that this Savior is born for them, personally. These shepherds are elect shepherds.

They may have been nobodies among their own society, but the angels rejoice to tell them that they are verse 14, "those with whom God is pleased." That is to say they're favored,

they're privileged. They just thought of themselves as regular old shepherds, bumping around the fields, stubbin' their toes on rocks, cleaning up after sheep. No. They're elect shepherds.

They have been counted among those whom God has granted his special pleasure, to save them. It's a select group, a privileged group of people indeed, listen, the peace of God rests, not upon all people without exception. The Bible does not teach that all people are going to heaven. The peace of God rests only upon those whom he's chosen. And we learned that from the very last term there in the text of verse 14, it's the term *eudokia*, which is rendered in our translation "with whom he is pleased." Another way to translate that phrase is "peace on those whom he is pleased to grant it." Whenever this term is used in Luke's Gospel, number of times, it refers to God's pleasure in the outworking of his sovereign will. So this Christmas Evangel, this good news is about the outworking of God's sovereign grace.

It's as Paul told the Ephesians, Ephesians 1:5, that God "predestined his people to be adopted as children into his family, through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his

will." The idea here then is, what the angels are rejoicing in, is the fact that God's peace, through the Savior born that day in Bethlehem, it rests upon those whom God has chosen, in accordance with his good pleasure. Listen, this is such good news. Such good news. I know myself. I know some of you too. Look, folks, we are not those who are first chosen on the team, are we? There's nothing beautiful in us. Except the fact that we reflect the image and the glory of God, being image bearers of him and yet that image is a distorted image because of the fall. There's nothing that makes us acceptable in God's sight.

Even the best that we have to offer, Isaiah tells us 64:6, "all of our righteous deeds are like filthy rags." And take all of our good works and everything that we think we have to offer, that makes us better than our fellow man, and offer those up to God. You know what they smell like to God? Dirty clothes. That's an insult to him. Such good news. Because it's not up to us. It's up to God. God has bypassed the strong and the proud. God has bypassed the arrogant and the haughty and he has put his grace upon the lowly.

That's why Mary rejoiced. Luke 1:46, when she said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, because" and he, she says, "my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, because he has looked upon the humble estate of his servant." She knew what she was. She continued in that same theme down in verse 50. "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation, he has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud and the thoughts of their hearts. He's brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate. He's filled the hungry with good things, the rich, he sent away empty."

That message about the subversion of the proud and the mighty, to show grace to his humble people, those who fear him from generation to generation. That's a message that formed the heart of the evangelical witness of these angels, when Christ was born in Bethlehem. That brings us to a final reason the angels rejoiced here. They rejoice number one, at the cessation of God's wrath. Number two, at the revelation of God's Son. Number three, at the salvation of God's people. And finally, number four, angels rejoice at the magnification of God's glory. The magnification of God's glory, or the exaltation of God's

glory, two aspects of God's glory here, I want you to see, that brought joy to the angels.

As I said, the very beginning, the angels are not the ones who are the subjects and the targets of divine salvation, are they? They just rejoice in telling people about it. That shows their love for the glory of God. They love his glory, they love his, his character, who he really is, his identity, his person, his work. They just love to explain that to people. In and of itself, that message that they get to speak is enough for them. That's our gift too. Doesn't matter how many gifts are under the tree for you this Christmas, if there are no gifts at all. In fact, if you're in the greatest human debt, you can be rich with this message.

First aspect of God's glory that their proclaim comes in verse 12, when the angel said there, "This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." Why is that an evidence of God's glory? Because he delights to magnify himself in weakness. What we count as weakness with no strength, he says, "Ah opportunity for me and

me alone to be glorified." Notice the tender mercy of God and the kindness of his condescension and grace.

Not only has the Savior been born for you, verse 11, there is a sign for you. The sign is a swaddled baby lying in a manger. That is the very picture of humility, of a divine power that's made perfect in human weakness. That baby is completely dependent. Mother swaddles the baby so the baby doesn't scratch itself with its fingernails. So the baby's comforted and secure and warm. Baby's absolutely dependent, lying in a manger waiting for what? Food, getting rest, left to its own, that baby will not survive. In that dependency, God showed himself, strong, after what the shepherds just heard, a human baby fulfills prophecy, save sinners, descends from David, anointed by God to be Israel's King, who is incarnated as the Sovereign Lord, they had to wonder, what in the world is he doing on a feeding trough? That's a good question.

The answer is in that word, sign. It's a strange enough predicament for any newborn baby to be found in a, in a manger, but particularly for this baby. The searching shepherds would know for certain that this baby and no other was the one whom

the angel spoke. So it's a perfect sign for the shepherds to go and make the correct identification. But significance of the sign is in the contrast, to how a king should enter the world. The sign signifies the essence of Christ's mission, provides a clearer picture that in Christ God draws nearer to the humble. Job said, Job 22:29, "God saves the lowly" or as David fully knew, Psalm 138:6 "For though the Lord is on high. He regards the lowly."

Summed up in Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the Lord who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in a high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, to revive the heart of the contrite.'" Is there anybody higher than God? No. Anybody more holy, anybody more resplendent, anybody more magnificent than God? No, no, no and no. Yet he condescends and he dwells with the humble and contrite. The birth of God's son, to be laid into a rough, hewn feeding trough for animals.

It's a clear indication, God is basically foreshadowing and forecasting what he intends to do as he associates himself with the lowly and it causes these powerful angels who rejoice in the

subversion of human power structures, causes these powerful angels to rejoice. In fact it's what causes the heavens to open up, to reveal this eruption of praise from, that angelic army. Mustered up, standing in their ranks, ready not to go to war, but to go to peace.

Look at Luke 2:13-14. Here is the second aspect of divine glory that they rejoiced in. "Suddenly there was an, with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'"

This is a call here to, to rejoice by this angelic host inviting all men kind to render joyful praise to God. I bet if you or I were there on that field that night, just seeing that angelic army, we'd been compelled to worship. Don't ya think? This holy army of heaven is a symbol, not to march into battle, not to execute judgment on the earth, as they will one day. Rather they have been mustarded up to call mankind to join them in giving glory to God.



On the one hand this is exhortation to mankind. That is ascribe glory to God, give him the glory due his name. On the other hand this is a prayer to God for peace. Which will be fulfilled through the messiah. As the angels rejoice in this magnification of God's glory, through the birth of Jesus Christ, in the revelation of God's son, for the salvation of his people. They are also here praying a blessing of peace will fall among mankind. Folks, no one can comprehend the longing for peace. Or know what it takes to accomplish peace or even appreciate the reality the enjoyment of peace, like a soldier.

These angelic warriors, they know what peace demands. They know paradoxically that man's peace with God will be won only through warfare. The announcement of peace was the declaration, a heavenly declaration of war. Which would be won by heaven's champion. Peace would come by means of the most profound war. Conducted by the greatest soldier, the commander of the host of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll overcome the greatest opponents, sin, Satan, death. And he'll win the greatest victory, which is life eternal. It's a peace that was won on the cross as God "made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in

him we might become the righteousness of God.” No wonder the angels rejoiced, right?

The opportunity to evangelize, to proclaim this gospel, must have been a particular delight for these holy angels. The Bible tells us the angels take great pleasure in observing, really from the outside, kind of, almost as we’re looking over the fence into somebody else’s backyard. They enjoy looking at God’s redemptive relationship with us. With frail human beings, fills them with wonder. Peter said, in 1 Peter 1:12, “The things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven,” that is this Evangel, this gospel message, “those are things in which angels long to look.”

They don’t fully understand this glory that we enjoy. And yet they rejoice in it as if it were their own message, for themselves with themselves as the targets of God’s grace. According to Hebrews 1:14 The angels, they were not created to have that special relationship with God, they were created instead as “ministering spirits. Sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.” Who’s that? That’s us.

And that's why on this occasion, this visit, to these lowly shepherds in the fields outside of Bethlehem. This was their supreme pleasure and joy. This is the purpose for which they're created. To serve the elect. They came to announce the good news of Immanuel, God with us. That God has taken up residence with man kind in the person of Jesus Christ, born that day, in the city of David, we call that day Christmas Day and we enter into the angel's joy to participate with them, as true evangelicals. We're offered a profound joy and privilege of joining their ranks here.

Which we can do by believing their evangelistic message of good news. Like all the holy angels who believe everything God tells them, we enter into the same joy by believing everything God tells us. We rejoice with them in the end of God's wrath, in the revelation of God's son, in the salvation of God's people, and the full exaltation and magnification of God's glory. We become their partners of joy as we join their ranks as fellow evangelists to proclaim peace on earth through salvation in Jesus Christ. That's the message we have the privilege to share this Christmas. Amen?

If there are any of you here, who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to talk with me, talk with one of us after the service. Anybody who is sitting around here who looks like they belong here, just talk to them and ask them, Hey do you know this message of the Gospel? And if they say, no, say, well then come with me because were going to find somebody who does," because we love to explain more thoroughly, more fully the real meaning of Christmas in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Our father, it is our joy and privilege and pleasure to join in the rejoicing with the angels, as we sing these last few songs. I know that our hearts are more fully informed, our minds have greater understanding than perhaps they did when we came in this, this building, this place today. And we ask Father that you would help us with hearts filled with gratitude to express great joy to you, for the gift of your Son that you have given.