

1

LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING: The King Saved (Christmas Eve 2023)ⁱ Luke 2:10-20

INTRODUCTION:

Are you having a good time this evening? Great music! I love Christmas time.

Gift Giveaway

Listen, I have a gift here that I would like to give away this evening. And you know, every kid has been asking a question for the past couple of weeks, at least in their mind. If you have had presents under the tree, and you have kids, they've been asking, "What is in that box?" How many of you that have kids have had your kids ask that question? How many kids here tonight think that you're the best at figuring out what is inside gifts?

Well, I need some help tonight. Here's what I need. I need help from one of the kids here to help me try to figure out what is in this box. Are there any kids here that would like to help me figure out what is in this gift? And here's the deal, whoever can help me gets to keep the gift. Sound good? Any kids here that would like to help me figure out what's inside? [Look for participants and pick out a kid to come on stage.] Come on up. You guys give him/her a hand.

Thanks for coming up and helping me out tonight. What is your name? Alright, _____, do you think you can help me figure out what is in this gift? Okay, great! Now, what are some things that you do to try and figure out what is inside a gift? Lift it? Shake it? What if it's breakable?! Okay. So, let's see you in action. Let's see if you can figure out what's inside this gift. [Shake it, sniff it, listen to it, feel how heavy it is, etc.]

Okay, so what do you think it is? What about you guys; do you pros out there have any guesses? [Field some guesses]. Okay, _____, they think it is something like, _____. But I want to know what you think it is. So, I'm going to count to three and you the first thing that comes to your mind of what you think it is. Okay?! You got it? One, two, three...

Interesting! Hmmmm. Well, do you want to know what is really inside the gift? Well, here's the deal, we are going to find out what's in there and whatever is in there, it is yours. Is that okay? If it's a bad gift, it's yours! LOL. Now, you need to know I did not wrap that. If I wrapped it, it would not be that pretty. My wife wrapped that. Didn't she do a great job?

2

Okay, well let's tear into it. So, what's in there? Peppermints, candy, what else? Money?! How much money? \$100?! Wow! That's yours! Is that a good gift?

Y'all give _____ a hand. Isn't that awesome! Merry Christmas, buddy.

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE:

I think we can all agree that one of the greatest things about Christmas is seeing kids get excited when they open up gifts. There's just something about watching that is the best feeling on earth. I think it's because there is pure joy.

You know, Christmas is really all about the greatest gift ever given. The gift that _____ opened today was awesome. But the best gift ever given is Jesus. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave, His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life." Christmas is about God giving us His Son, salvation. There are a few things that I want to share with us quickly, a devotional thought.

We have been in a teaching series called Let Earth Receive Her King. And this morning I want to talk about how The King of all kings has saved. Jesus has brought salvation. And we are going to look at 3 things about King Jesus bringing salvation. But before we dive in, I want to read our text this morning. Luke, chapter 2, verses 8 – 20.

*⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news** of great joy that will be **for all the people**. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Savior, who is Christ the Lord**.¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was 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 those with whom he is pleased!" ¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, **they made known** the saying that had been told them concerning this child.¹⁸**And all who heard it wondered** at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them*

in her heart. ²⁰*And the shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen**, as it had been told them.*

This account of the birth of Jesus is an announcement of a Savior being born. It is undeniable that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. He is the fulfillment of the promised Messiah. King Jesus is the Savior of the world that these angels have announced. He has saved, rescued, us from our sin.

I want to point out to us, this morning, 3 things about the announcement of a Savior's coming. First, the fact that The King has saved is...

1) Good news!

When the angel appeared to the shepherds in the field, they told them not to fear. They were bringing good news of great joy.

Now, the Bible portrays that people that have an encounter with an angel are often filled with fear.ⁱⁱ It's not surprising because angels are powerful, and they are not even God, but they're powerful beings.ⁱⁱⁱ And in many cases, angels brought news of God's wrath, they didn't typically bring good news.

We are also led to believe here that the angel's appearing was sudden. Combined with his radiance, this angel struck the shepherds with fear. The literal translation of the phrase, "*they were filled with great fear,*" is they were frightened with massive fear.^{iv} In other words, they weren't just startled, they were terrified. But again, why would this response? Sure, an encounter like this is rare. So, I can understand being startled, but why massive fear?

Well, Almighty God is a holy God. Scripture often reminds us that there is no one like Him. The people in the Scripture that encountered God often feared for their lives. Why? Because the holiness of God is so great that sinful humanity cannot come into His presence.

Take for example Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is the Jewish Day of Atonement. On this day, once a year, only the high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies in the Temple. And he did so to offer blood sacrifices to atone for his sin and the national sins of the people of Israel. Access to the Holy of Holies was only granted to the High Priest and only on one day a year. That's because of the Shekinah glory of God's presence.

Tradition says the High Priest would wear a rope around his ankles in case he died from being in the presence of God. I don't know if that took place or not, but the told tradition communicates the awesome glory of God.^v The point is that there was reason to be afraid to be in the presence of any holy being.

But the angel told the shepherds, "I am not bringing bad news. Instead I am bringing good news of great joy." What is it about the arrival of the Savior is good news? Well, because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, sinful humanity's relationship with a Holy God was restored.

The gospel accounts tell us that when Jesus died on the cross, 5 miracles occurred. One of those miracles was the tearing of the curtain in the Temple from top to bottom. See, that curtain was what separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. It was said to be as thick as a man's hand and about 60 feet tall. The significance of the tearing of that curtain is that by way of Jesus' death, His atoning sacrifice for sins, we were no longer separated from God. In fact, the book of Hebrews says that by of the blood of Christ, we can boldly approach the throne of grace!

Listen, the good news that the angels brought was news of a restored relationship with God. That God loved us so much that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And there is nothing that we have done to deserve such grace, but that God purposed to show His loving kindness.

The King has saved and that is good news of great joy. Secondly, the fact that The King has saved is news...

2) For everyone.

The angel said in verse 10, "*I bring you good news of great joy that will be **for all the people**.*" The good news of rescue is for all people! Have you ever wondered why the angel appeared to shepherds? I mean, if I'm writing this story, or choosing a way to announce this great news, I can think of a lot of other people to appear to.^{vi}

A shepherd was not a desired position. It was typically reserved for the lowliest of people. These were not people of prominence or influencers. The shepherds here in Luke 2 are just that, they are unnamed. They were most likely illiterate.^{vii} Yet that is who God chose to send an angel to announce the Savior's birth.

See, Jesus' arrival is good news for all people, and that point is clearly made in God's choice to reveal this news to common shepherds. Think about it, they were the first people on earth, outside of Mary and Joseph, to know about Jesus' arrival. They were the only people to lay eyes on Jesus when He was born. Most scholars believe that the wise men didn't arrive to present gifts to Jesus until He was 2. And by announcing this news to lowly shepherds, it demonstrates God's love and value for every single person.

In sending angels to the shepherds, God communicated His love all people. For the poor, the people who are not put together, the forgotten, and the dirty.^{viii}

You might be here today and thinking that there is no way God could love you. You might think that you are too bad of a person, or too insignificant, or unworthy of God's love. That your life is too messy for God to care about. But I hope you can see that God's invitation to shepherds to be the first to set their eyes on Jesus, shows His desire for you to do the same. Listen, I can say without a doubt that God loves you and Christmas is proof of that.

The Savior's coming is good news of great joy for everyone. Thirdly, the fact that the King has saved is...

3) To be shared.

Look what the shepherds did when they heard this news. Verse 15, *"**When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.'**"*¹⁶*And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. **17**And when they saw it, **they made known** the saying that had been told them concerning this child."*

A couple things that I want to point out here. First, from the very onset, God set up the Christmas story to be shared. Follow me for just a moment. He appeared to shepherds and they "made known," the news that was shared with them. Further, they returned glorifying and praising God and everyone who heard the news wondered, that is they were in awe.

It is God's desire that we share the good news of great joy with all people. It is our responsibility to carry the gospel message. It is a story that is meant to be shared. Romans 10:14 says, *"**How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never***

heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" And it is The Lord Jesus Himself that charged us to go to all nations proclaiming the good news of the gospel. It is a story that is to be shared.

The other thing that I want to point out is the shepherd's response. They came to the conclusion, after God revealed it to them through an angel, that they wanted to go see what had happened. And verse 16 says they went with haste.

Now, I want you to think about what had to happen for them to be able to do that. They either had to pack up all their supplies and led their entire flock into town, or they had to make arrangements for them to be secure so they could be gone. My point is that it would have been way easier for them to say, "That's cool, but we can't leave our flock." Or they could have said, "Man, it's too late, we will go see that tomorrow." But they didn't. When God showed up, they responded!

You know, I think there are many times that God shows up in our lives and we put off responding to Him. We think of all the challenges and hurdles there are to following Him. Whether that is leaving a life of sin, or responding to a call on our life, we can put off responding to God. But for these shepherds, the news of God's salvation was not something to be put off. It was something to respond to immediately.

What about you? How is God revealing Himself to you this Christmas? How will you respond to Him? For some of you it is a response of faith. You need to place faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life. For others it is something God is calling you to, a ministry, or something else. I urge you, don't put off responding to God. You forfeit a blessing when you do.

If you are here and you have questions about what it means to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life, we are going to stick around after service and we'd love nothing more than to visit with you about what it means to make Jesus Lord of your life.

But Christmas, the King's coming, is good news, of great joy, for everyone, and is worthy of being shared. Would you pray with me. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: Bible Ref, "Luke 2:8-20," published by BibleRef.com, accessed online: <https://www.bibleref.com/Luke/2/Luke-2-8.html>; J.D. Greear, "Jesus' Favorites," sermon preached at Summit Church, December 20, 2020, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/jesus-favorites>; Got Questions, "Did the high priest have a rope tied to him when he entered the Holy of Holies?" published by gotquestions.org, accessed online: <https://www.gotquestions.org/high-priest-rope.html>; Bible Study Tools, "Presence of God," published by Biblestudenttools.com, accessed online: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/presence-of-god/#:~:text=Many%20people%20who%20encountered%20God,%3B%20Psalm%2068%3A8%20>.

ⁱⁱ Pointed out in the Bible Study Tools article.

ⁱⁱⁱ BibleRef articles.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v For more on this discussion, see the article by Got Questions.

^{vi} Concept taken from J.D. Greear.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid.