

## The King Is Here!

Luke 2:8-21

Christmas Traditions from Better Homes and Gardens Magazine: Advent Calendar, Send Out Christmas Letters, Give an Ornament, Christmas Tree, Enjoy Christmas Dinner, Bake Christmas Cookies, Make Pomanders, Hang Stockings, Outdoor Lights, Poinsettias, Set up Nativity Scene, Gingerbread House, Hang Mistletoe, Nice Dinnerware, Read a Christmas Book, Go Window Shopping, Go Look At Lights, Christmas Caroling, Open One Present, Set Out Milk and Cookies. Read the Christmas story as a tradition!

Narrate 1-7. There wasn't a mean innkeeper!

### The Angels

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

### Jesus is both a Merciful Savior and a Sovereign Lord.

(Introduced at FBCE as Chase Kreg) But what's interesting is that in announcing Jesus's entry into the world, he doesn't use his name—and it's not because he forgot, He uses three titles to describe this child—Savior, Christ, and Lord—it's the only time in the NT where these titles are used together. It's almost a summary statement—someone's who's come from God with His anointing (Christ) to rescue us (Savior) and rule us (Lord). Rescue and rule!

And I cannot tell you how important it is that when it comes to Christ, we guard against ever thinking that we could separate his rescue from his rule. The reality is that in much of American church culture, there is the idea that you can receive Jesus as your Savior without having to submit to him as your Lord. That you can trust Jesus in your heart, without ever really having to follow Jesus with your life. That you can love who he is without having to do what he says.

And the truth is, if Christ is just a Savior who's come to rescue, then we would owe him gratitude, but he's not just a Savior who's come to rescue he's also a Lord who's come to rule. Which means he is not just interested in our applause, but your allegiance. God's rule over your life is represents his commitment to not only save you from your sin, but save you from yourself. These can't be separated. The king born in Bethlehem that we are celebrating this Christmas is both Savior and Lord and his rescue is not on offer apart from his rule...And if you understand the character of God you'd never want to separate the two.

### Christ's rescue and rule is the source, not the enemy, of our joy.

Look at what the angel says here, "10 I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." For this angel, the fact that Christ has come to rescue and rule his people is good news that should bring great joy! Now to our society, boundaries and authority are seen as the enemy of joy. In fact people are happiest when they submit to no one other than themselves. And yet when it comes to relationship between great joy and submission to God, I want us to think about who is saying this. It's an angel who's never sinned and has lived in perfect submission to God's rule for his entire existence...think about his perspective

“I come from a place where there is a kind of joy and gladness and satisfaction and celebration that you can’t even imagine, and it’s because everyone lives in perfect submission to God’s rule—ahh it’s...heaven. Take it from someone who has experienced the bliss of being ruled by God every moment of his life, the fact that God has personally come to exercise rule over you is really good news that should bring you great joy! You don’t know what you’re missing out on. Y’all are miserable trying to rule your own lives. Honestly when we look down from heaven, it’s just hard to watch.”

Now I’m not sure if it was planned this way or the other angels just couldn’t wait anymore, but as this angel is speaking about the sign the shepherds are going to receive the text says, “And suddenly there was 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.” It’s almost as if the other angels have to get in on the action—too much joy for only one angel to announce this thing. The Messiah has finally come! They’ve been waiting for thousands of years—to sing this song! And today they finally get to sing it—and the song they sing leads us to our next truth...

### **Jesus came to establish peace between God and sinners.**

You’ll remember the text tells us how the shepherds initially reacted to this. Verse 9 says they were filled with “great fear” some of your translations say “terribly frightened” Why? Because the text says “an angel of the Lord appeared to them and glory of the Lord shone around them” When sinners encounter the holiness they fear because they sense so keenly in that moment how fallen and sinful and broken they are. Wasn’t always like this and it was never suppose to be like this. In Gen. 1-2 Adam and Eve had peace in God’s presence, and yet when sin enters the world and God comes down to examine the situation Adam says, “I heard you coming and I was afraid and I hid myself” The holiness and glory of God that once brought peace, now brings fear. You keep reading it brings separation—Adam and Even banished from God’s presence and under God’s judgment and the question we’re left with is will man ever have that peace with God again?

When you look at the sin and brokenness in the world, even the most non-religious person has a sense that it’s not supposed to be this way. Everyone longs for peace...I want rest my soul is constantly in turmoil—worrying and doubting and stressing and striving and I want peace—you’re longing for Eden. We’re longing for a kind of peace that money and success and reputation can’t offer us. (NEVER ENOUGH song) This lady is longing for Eden, and even if she’s holds the world she won’t get it, bc our biggest need is not to have peace with the creation but peace with the creator. And Christ has come so that when we encounter the holiness of God we can heed the angels words, “Do not be afraid”. The glory that consumes sinners has come to redeem sinners... Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled. And that reconciliation is by sheer grace...

It’s no coincidence here that this royal birth announcement among all people to shepherds, which leads us to truth number 4

## The Shepherds

### **Jesus came to rescue the lowly and the outcast.**

When we think of shepherds we think of cute kids in the Christmas pageant but in the first century, that is not how they were viewed. Shepherds were a despised class. They were dirty, their work meant that they couldn’t keep the ceremonial law so they were looked down upon. They had a reputation of being dishonest—their testimonies weren’t admissible in court. They were social outcasts. And when the angel of

the Lord and the heavenly hosts come to announce that the long awaited Messiah has finally come to bring rescue, they don't announce it to the popular and important, they don't announce it to super moral or successful, this royal announcement is made to the least likely and least deserving audience—a group of morally questionable outcasts—the kind of people Jesus came to save. The angel says very clearly in vs. 11, “For unto **you** is born this day...a Savior.” Jesus came for people like this! The undeserving and the broken. **(Crystal Cotton)**

And this is exactly what we see throughout his ministry—caring for the poor and tax collectors and prostitutes and the least of these and the religious people hated him for it. To made them so mad because they were operating on a works based salvation where we try really hard for God and as we put forth a ton of moral and religious effort reward us with salvation and blessing. And when they see Jesus going after people they warn their children not to grow up and be like, it makes them mad that grace is being extended to people who are so undeserving.

But stands in complete contrast with the attitude of the angels towards God's grace. I love this. These angels have lived in perfect submission to God their entire lives and they're saying, “As beings who have never sinned, it thrills us to announce that our king has come for those who have; people like you” not us. Jesus did not come to earth to save us, to bleed for us, or die for us. No forgiveness extended to angels. We sin, we die. you sin—God dies in your place.” And when 1 Pet. 1:12 talks about angels longing to look into these things he's talking about saving, forgiving redeeming love that only sinners receive...and they are on the outside of this whole forgiveness thing celebrating a redemption that they're not apart of and yet it's so amazing and is so glorious that that can't help but stand up and cheer.

And their joy should rebuke us. It seems that so often the good news of great joy has become the tired routine Christian message that doesn't seem that relevant to our daily lives. Is it not a shame that these angels seem more excited that God is saving someone else than we are that God is saving us. This is the wonder of Christmas—the savior of the world is born unto you! And fortunately that's not lost on the shepherds and we see their response of obedience...

“<sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup> And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.”

### **The glory of God fuels obedience to God.**

Most of the time when we study the bible we're talking about what's in the text. But as you study the text it's often helpful to ask, what is this text not saying? What is not in the text? And it's important for us to realize that there is no command to the shepherds in this passage to go see the child that has been born or tell anyone else about the good news. Angel doesn't say seek him, behold him, tell other about him. It just happens. Why? It is simply the natural overflow of experiencing God's glory and hearing God's gospel. The angels announce this incredible news, go up in to heaven, and the shepherd's immediate response is, vs. 15 “Let's us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened” That word “thing” is the Greek word for “word” (*dabar*). The word that has become flesh. And that's what they do. They head straight for Bethlehem.

By the way, this could have meant leaving their flock unguarded—which represented economic risk—shepherding was their livelihood. It could have meant taking their flock to Bethlehem, which represents

inconvenience and extra work. But in light of the glory of the gospel that has just been revealed to them, they don't even bat an eye at these concerns and they head straight for Christ. They find everything just as the angel had said, testify to everyone about the good news they've heard, and leave worshipping—vs 20 “And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them.”

Nothing motivates people to love—worship—live for—risk for—tell about Christ than beholding His glory. Every fear you have about sharing the Gospel they had too. Fear for reputation, fear that people wouldn't believe them, inconvenience associated with it all and those fears were obliterated in light of the glory of God in the announcement of the Gospel. No lessons or tips about how to share. Just a group of people who experience God's glory and were compelled to seek the Word and share the word. That's why we talk about the glory of God. We're not giving out interesting life advice each Sunday. We're trying to put the glory of God on display! We're just worshipping our way through the text. Oh God for a fresh vision of your glory that smashes our little fears and reorders our little worlds so that your glory and your gospel can go to the ends of the earth and that as it does, people would respond like these shepherds.

And yet we should expect different responses. Even in this text we see a contrast between the response of the crowd, and the response of Mary. The crowd responds with wonder, the shepherds with worship, but in a very different but admirable way, Mary responds with deep contemplation.

Vs. 19 says, “But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.” Mom and dad put their arms around each other and watch their kids open presents. And they just take it all in. That's not what's happening. Mary is puzzled. This word treasure means to keep or preserve, so she's trying to put all of this together and she doesn't understand what all of this means. One of the leading commentators on Luke says that the phrase pondering in her heart is essentially the same as the English idiom, “mulling things over.” (Bock 223) And in light of what she's heard—that this Child is Savior and Lord—intelligent reflection is not only an appropriate response from Mary but it's necessary response from everyone.

## Mary

### **The reality of the Incarnation demands a thoughtful response from all people.**

Let me be as clear as I possibly can, especially to my unbelieving friends in the room. We love celebrating Christmas—seeing family, opening presents, singing songs—but at the end of the day, Christians we do not celebrate Christmas because we believe it's fun but because we believe it's true. We don't celebrate Christmas out of sentimentality, we celebrate it because we actually believe that roughly 2000 years ago the second person of the trinity took on flesh and became a man in order to both live and die for sinners. And when we mull that over and ponder that, and you conclude that God has come to rescue and rule his people it seems like a life of faith and worship and obedience is the only response that makes sense.

And is why a Christ-centered Christmas is offensive to our culture. Our culture is fine with Christmas as a festival of lights, and sleigh bells, and stockings and candy canes and gingerbread men. But when you talk about Christmas as a celebration of Christ then things get a dicy for our culture. Why? Because when you think deeply about words like Savior and Lord it takes our culture into uncomfortable territory. How? Well think of the Word Savior...it implies that we're weak and needy. We live in a society that talks about how good and capable and deserving everyone is (This Is Me “nothing we're not worthy of” lyric) and the last thing we want to do is to admit that we're so bad we need a savior—that despite our best efforts to pull together a good enough life we can't make ourselves right; But that is what Christmas celebrates the fact that someone else has come to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. That's what it means that Jesus is a Savior... And if it's difficult for our society to accept a Savior it's even more difficult to accept a Lord.

Why? Because we idolize personal freedom—the idea that we should be able to do whatever we want and live without boundaries. And we're afraid that in submitting to Christ as Lord we're losing our freedom, but irony is the exact opposite is true. Look deep down you know that life without boundaries isn't freedom at all. You know why, freedom is not the absence of boundaries but the presence of the right boundaries. A fish is most free in the water. When it functions according to its design and friends living under God rule and reign is that water. That's why in the new creation we will be more free than we've ever been, because our hearts and minds will be completely conformed to Christ. You will never be more free than you will on the day when you can only do God's will. And it's this perfectly designed freeing rule that Christ offers us...

And all that's left is who will we respond? Remember, when it comes to Christmas, what matters is not whether or not you like it, what matters I whether or not it's true. If it didn't happen, it's simply a fairy tale we can safely ignore, but if this actually happened, then you and I can no longer live for ourselves.

You've tried ruling your own life yourself set goals and made promises and started new routines and it'll never be enough. You're still broken inside and you don't need a new routine you need rescue and it's offered to you in a king who has come from heaven to rescue and rule your life. That is what we're celebrating at Christmas!