

Andrew K. Frey

Christmas Day

Luke 2:8-14

**And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.<sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.<sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.<sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”**

**<sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,**

**<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”**  
(NIV 84)

Theme: Glory to God in the Highest.

1. A Savior has been born: Christ the Lord.
2. He brings Peace

During our three mid-week advent service we looked at three of the four songs in the first two chapters of Luke’s gospel. Today we look at the third song, the Song of the angels. It is often referred to as *Gloria in excelsis*, because of the first few words of its Latin translation. This song is the shortest out of the four songs recorded by Luke. But unlike the other three songs, this one wasn’t song by a human; it was sung by a multitude of angels at the birth of Jesus. And that is what we celebrate today. Today we join the angels in singing, glory to God in the highest. For today a Savior has been born, he is Christ the Lord. And this child brings peace.

Our text for this Christmas morning picks up with some shepherds outside of Jerusalem. They were watching over their flock to make sure that nothing unusual happened to them. And what they saw on that night, over 2000 years ago, was certainly unusual. Luke tells us that **an angel of the Lord appeared before them**. We are not told what this angel looked like. It was probably wearing bright white clothes. And had a radiant face. A creature with wings, too bright to look at directly. It was something they had never seen before.

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But an angel wasn’t the only thing they saw that night. Luke also tells us that **the glory of the shone around them**. The glory of the Lord is a manifestation of God himself. Often when the glory of the Lord appeared in the Old Testament he was enveloped in a cloud. God had to hide his glory from us since because of our sins we would die if we saw him. Here we see that the glory of the Lord was all around them. God came down to this earth. The birth of his son was spectacular—such an important event in the history of the world, that God came in his glory to mark this occasion.

Seeing these two things—the angel and the glory of the Lord, made the shepherds afraid. They didn’t understand what was going on. So they angel told them that there was no reason to be afraid. For he was bringing **good news of great joy**. That good news was that today, a Savior has been born. That is a good thing, for we need to be saved. Ever since the time of Adam and Eve, we have been nothing but horrible miserable sinners. Our ancestors rebelled against him and so do we. Every day we go against his will. We fail to obey his commands. And because of our sinful nature we deserve nothing but God’s wrath and punishment. We deserve to die an eternal death. But today **a Savior has been born to you**. That Savior is Jesus. That baby would go on to live on this earth for more than 30 years. We may sin against God every single day, but Christ never fell into temptation. He never committed a single sin. But he did become guilty of all our sins. For he took them upon himself when he died on the cross. And because our sins were counted against him, he was forsaken by God. He suffered through hell for us. Then he rose from the dead. Not only did he pay for our sins, but he promises us that because he rose from the dead, we too will rise from the dead. Christ saved us from eternal damnation.

The angel went on to say that this Savior is Christ. Christ is the Greek version of the Hebrew word, Messiah. They both mean the Anointed One. The one God chose from the beginning of the world to be the Savior. He is the one God promised to Adam and Eve when they rebelled against him. He is the one God promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When God told David that his descendent will reign on his throne forever, he was thinking about Jesus. Jesus Christ—the

Messiah, is the one the Jews had been waiting for, for thousands of years. He was the one the shepherds anticipated their whole lives. Some of the Jews were not expecting the Messiah to be their Savior. They were expecting him to be a political leader. Or perhaps a physical king. At the time of Jesus the Jews were under Roman rule. The Jews thought that the Messiah might come and lead them out of Roman rule. He could establish an earthly kingdom, which would rule over the Promises Land forever. But instead, the shepherds learned that the Messiah wasn't an earthly king. Rather he was the Savior, who would save us from our sins.

And this Savior to be born is Christ, the Lord. Lord—the same name used for God. In fact, God is called Lord more often than he is called God. And now Jesus is called the Lord. That means Jesus is God. Sure he is Mary's son. He is human. But he was also conceived by the Holy Spirit. That baby who was laid in a manger is God. The Almighty, all powerful, all knowing God lying in a place meant to feed animals. God did this for us. God become man in order to save us.

This is the good news that the angel shared with the shepherds. But the angel wasn't the only one the shepherds saw that night. In fact, the shepherds saw many angels.

Luke writes, **Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel.** We don't know how many angels there are. When John recorded his revelation he said the angels numbered **thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.** The angels are too numerous for us to count. That night a multitude of angels appeared in the sky. Thousands upon thousands of heavenly beings appearing down on earth. Singing praises to God. They came down to sing God praises because God was born. He was putting his plan of saving the world into effect. **Glory to God in the Highest,** they shouted. They shouted the praises of God. For he came down to earth. He sent his son to save the whole world. He gave up his son for his enemies. God didn't need to do this. We rejected his grace. We became his enemies. And yet, God sent his son to save us. This is God's grace. And nothing but his grace. The angels sang the praises of God, not because he saved them. They were already in heaven, they didn't need to be saved. Rather

they gave glory to God because he saved us. God's act of sending his son to save us was so spectacular that the angels, whom it didn't affect couldn't help but sing God's praises.

The angels continued with their song, **on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.** Peace on earth? Not here. Not now. This world is full of sin, and hate and crime. There are wars, murder, and rape. Every day we are reminded that there is no peace in this world. Things may be going fine for awhile, but soon something happens to us or to someone we know and we realize there is no peace in this world full of sin. This world is never going to be full of peace. Because of sin, there will always be strife, hatred, and discord.

But the angels shouted, **and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.** How can there be peace on this earth? Only because of Jesus. At one time we were God's enemies. We were hostile toward him. But Christ reconciled us back to God. He brought us back to him and restored our relationship with God. Through the blood that the little baby would go on to shed, our sins would be paid for. We are no longer sinners in God's eyes. His wrath is not going to come down upon us. Rather we are his children, who will receive his inheritance of heaven. We do have peace in this world, for we have peace with God. This is only possible through the one lying in a manger. There are many passages in the Bible which tell us about the peace that Christ brings us. We saw last night that Jesus is called the **Prince of Peace.** He is called the prince of peace because we have peace knowing that God loves us enough to come down on this earth to save us. Later on Isaiah prophesies about the suffering and death of Jesus. **He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.** Through his suffering and death on the cross all our sins have been paid for. Through Christ our sins have been removed, and that gives us peace. Paul says in Romans 5, **Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** Not only has the work of Christ taken away our sins, but God also declares us not guilty. Since we are not guilty of any sins we know that we are going to have peace forever in heaven.

But not everyone is going to heaven. The angel did tell the shepherds that **the good news of great joy will be for all the people.** And Christ certainly came to save the whole world. He died to take away the sins of everyone. But those who don't believe in him will be condemned. Only those who trust in Jesus as their one and only Savior will have peace. That is why the angels sang, **peace to men on whom his favor rests.** God's favor is on those who love him.

Through faith we have peace.

And that peace leads us to live at peace with God. We strive to obey his commands. And when we fail to obey him, we still have the peace of forgiveness. And we try to spread his peace to others. We tell as many as we can about the peace that he birth, life, and death bring us. We sing along with the angels, so that others may sing along as well.

We sing today, **Glory to God in the highest.** For today, a Savior has been born. But we join in this song, not just today but everyday. For he is Christ the Lord. Glory to God in the highest because that little baby, placed in a manger, gives us peace with God, now and forever. Amen.