

## For You Who Fear...

Christmas Day – 12/25/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 2:1-20 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 10-11, “**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. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’.**”

### **Introduction**

✘ I want to start us off with a very important Christmas question. Here it is, “What do you fear this morning?” I know, that may not seem like a very Christmasy kind of thing to ask, but bear with me and I’ll show you that it is very much a Christmas question.

→ So, what is it? What do you fear right now? As you travel from this place back toward home or to some other location to celebrate, do you fear a collision or a resulting injury to you and your family? Of course millions around the globe this morning have been struggling for a while now with the fear of contracting Covid; and on top of that many more have fears regarding the financial fallout from the pandemic, or a loss of freedom or some other ways that our lives might be permanently changed because of it.

→ What do you fear this morning? Is it loneliness, political upheaval, your after-Christmas bills, the long-term results of a recent health diagnosis, or getting together with a conflicted group of family or friends later on today?

### **I. Fearing with the Shepherds**

✘ As you can imagine, verse nine in our Gospel Reading indicates that the shepherds, too, were filled with fear on that first Christmas night, but it wasn’t over the little stuff.

→ It wasn’t over the price of sheep, or the unseen dangers that lurked in the darkness, or even the decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

✘ It was instead the angel of the Lord who “appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord” that “shone around them”. That’s what caused the shepherds to fear as they were “out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night”. Verse nine says that they were “filled with great fear”. The King James Bible says they were “sore afraid”.

→ And what was this “glory of the Lord” that “shone around them”? It was God’s messenger; an angel who appeared before them and actually spoke to them. How would you react if that happened before you while you were outside in the middle of the night?

✘ But make no mistake; this was not some fear manufactured by the shepherds’ over-active imaginations or silly superstitions. This was a godly fear that the shepherds had. It was a fear that recognized and acknowledged the presence and holiness of God.

→ It was a fear that quietly confessed and recognized that they were totally unworthy of being in the presence of the holy God because of their unholy sin. It was a fear that left the shepherds feeling naked and exposed before God as His glory surrounded them and His messenger appeared to them on that cold winter night.

✘ So what about you and me? Well, we are certainly not shepherds, but each of us has our own vocation: father, mother, son, daughter, husband and wife; and also private worker, state employee, medical technician, nurse, schoolteacher, accountant, road worker, firefighter, computer expert, delivery truck driver, or something else. Each one of us has our Christian vocation, just as the shepherds did. And we live and move and have our being in whatever “field” and over whatever “flock” God has placed us in His service here today.

→ The word “angel” means “messenger”. So today, whenever God’s Word is proclaimed through the voice of God’s pastor, teacher, parent or friend; or whenever we read God’s Word directly, that too serves as God’s messenger; as the angel of the Lord appearing before us and shining the glory of the Lord all around us.

→ Yes, Hebrews 4:12-13 tells us that God’s Word is “living and active ... piercing to the division of soul and of spirit ... and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart”. We are told that “no creature is hidden from [God’s] sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

✘ So it is that wherever our lives come face-to-face with God as He meets us there in His Word, it is then that the glory of the Lord shines around us. According to Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”.

→ We certainly don’t deserve to have that light of the knowledge of the glory of God, because like the shepherds, filled with fear that Christmas night we too are “sore afraid” because of our constant, repetitive and despicable sin.

## **II. But God’s Message is “Fear Not”!**

✘ But even with all of that, for all of us who are filled with fear at the prospect of standing before God alone on Judgment Day; we Christians – we who have been led by God’s Spirit to a godly repentance for our sin; we who are searching for cover for our nakedness and are craving the love, mercy, and affection of our gracious God; for us – for you, the message of Christmas is this, “Fear not!” (v.10) “Fear not!”, this is God’s Christmas Good News for all people around the world.

→ Fear not! For God Himself has acted decisively to save you from the guilt and eternal consequences of your poor, miserable sin. Yes, the same God who created you and was grieved when mankind turned away from Him in the Garden of Eden and every day ever since – that God is the One who still loves us all and wants all people to be saved and to know life again as it was in the beginning. This loving Lord of heaven and earth put His plan into place to buy His creation back from the curse of sin.

✘ His was a plan that only the almighty God could bring about to correct and make things right again. As an expression of His unfathomable love, He sent His one and only Son into this world in what appeared on the outside to be the most ordinary fashion – through the birth of a human baby. Yet in reality it was humanly impossible as that baby – God’s own Son, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin mother.

→ In this way He had what would seem to be two opposing natures. He is 100% human in every way according to His mother Mary and at the same time 100% God in every way being the second person of the Holy Trinity – without a beginning or an end.

→ So in this way, only Jesus was able to become sin for us and also live up to God’s Law perfectly in our place. His life then was the only life that could be sacrificed for you and me and for all people.

✘ Especially now in this pandemic age we humans have been forced to cancel all kinds of things – appointments, trips, weddings and even Christmas services in order to keep each other safe and avoid the spread of a deadly illness. But the one thing that no human can cancel is the results of our sin – no human that is, except for Jesus. For on that first Christmas, God put His plan in motion to cancel sin; all sin – forever!

→ “Fear not [the angel said], for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (vv. 10–11).

## **Conclusion**

- ⌘ Yes, in Christ there is no need to fear when we are surrounded by the glory of the Lord; no need to fear at the prospect of standing before our Maker on the Last Day of judgement. Why not? because of the Word that the angel proclaimed to the shepherds. Yes, because of Jesus, on that final day you will not be standing before God’s throne alone!
  - Instead, by faith and in the bond of our baptismal grace, you and I always stand together in Christ! To be “in Christ” is to be fearing and loving and trusting Him above all things. And just as the angel said, God’s final answer to fear; to all fear and to everyone’s fear, is Good News. It is grace and mercy; it is forgiveness and freedom from all fear, because Jesus Christ took God’s wrath and punishment that we all deserved.
  - That little baby in the manger, He is your Savior in every sense. He is your God. He is your brother and your Lord.
- ⌘ So “fear not” dear Christians; fear not today on Christmas, and every day of your life, including your last. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (v 11). Amen.