

Sermon for Christmas Day

Date: December 25, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Isaiah 62:10–12

Epistle Reading: Titus 3:4–7

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1–20

Sermon Text: Luke 2:8–11

Sermon Title: To Calm Your Fears



Psalm: Psalm 98

Hymns:

LSB 379 – O Come, All Ye Faithful

LSB 367 – Angels from the Realms of Glory

LSB 380 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

LSB 374 – Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

LSB 376 – Once in Royal David's City

LSB 387 – Joy to the World

Liturgy:

Special (With excerpts form Divine Service IV)



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Text: Luke 2:1–20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a 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. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” 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!”

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.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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Grace to you from the Price of Peace. Amen.

These days millions of people around the globe this morning have known fear from the virus that has gripped the world. Many fear the financial fallout from the pandemic, or the ways our lives will be permanently changed because of it. These are just a couple of the many things that can and do cause us fear. What do you fear? Loneliness? Political turmoil? Your after-Christmas bills?

The shepherds near Bethlehem that night were filled with fear, but it wasn't over the little stuff. It wasn't over the price of sheep, or the unseen dangers lurking in the darkness, or the decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.¹ It was the angel who appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord that shone around them. That is what caused the shepherds to fear, as they were out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night. They were "filled with great fear,"² Luke tells us. "Sore afraid," the King James Bible says. Filled with fear because of the glory of the Lord that shone around them when God's angelic messenger spoke to them.

This was a godly fear the shepherds had. It was a fear that recognized and acknowledged the presence and holiness of God. It was a fear of realizing their utter unworthiness to be in the presence of the holiness of heaven, because of their unholiness and sin. It was a fear that left the shepherds vulnerable and exposed before God whose glory surrounded them when His messenger appeared on that night.

What about us? We're not shepherds, but we do each have our own vocation: father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, worker, nurse, teacher, accountant, police, paramedic, and more. We each have our vocation, just as the shepherds, and we live, move and have our being in whatever "field" and over whatever "flock" God has placed us.

When we hear God's Holy Word, when the light of the Gospel shines around us it often confronts us in a similar way to how the angel's words from God confronted the shepherds. What are angels but God's messengers whom He sends to do His bidding and declare His Word. That Word which is "living and active" and "pierces to the division of soul and of spirit," that Word which "discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart" and makes it so 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."³

1 Luke 2:1

2 Luke 2:9

3 Hebrew 4:12-13

The very same glory of the Lord shines on us whenever and wherever our lives come face-to-face with Him who meets us in His Word and Sacraments.

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.⁴

That glory of God, which shines around us, as often as His Word breaks into our comfortable lives, that glory of God should rightly find us, like it the shepherds, filled with fear and awe, exposed, and “sore afraid” because of our sin.

Now for you who are filled with fear at the idea of standing before the throne of God alone on Judgment Day, for you who have been led by God’s Holy Spirit to a godly repentance for your sin, for you who are searching to cover your exposed state before God and are craving the love and mercy of our gracious, the way Adam and Eve knew Him in the beginning before the Fall, for you the message of Christmas, God’s good news to you this morning is, “Fear not!”

Fear not! For God Himself has acted personally to save you from your sin. He who created you, and was grieved by mankind’s turning away from Him, but who wants all people to be saved and to know life again as it was in the beginning, this loving Lord of heaven and earth has sacrificed Himself to buy His creation back from the the darkness of the devil.

He has done what only God could do to make things right again. God the Father has sent His one and only begotten Son into this world to take on your human nature, to become sin for you, to live up to God’s Law perfectly for you, and then to give His life into death for you, to silence the accusation and required condemnation of Torah Law forever. On that first Christmas, when Mary gave birth, God gave birth to His plan to destroy sin’s affect forever!

Fear not [the angel said], for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.⁵

The shepherds were afraid when the Word of God confronted them, but in Jesus, the Word made flesh, there is no need to fear when surrounded by the glory of the Lord. In Jesus, there is no need to fear the prospect of standing before your Maker on the Last Day, because in believing that Word you will not stand alone! By faith you always stand with Christ. In Christ, in fearing, loving and trusting

4 2 Corinthians 4:6

5 Luke 2:10–11

Him above all things, God’s final Word for you is good news. It is grace and it is mercy. It is because Jesus Christ was exposed before God and the whole world hanging on a cross that the full wrath of God over your sin is spent.

So “Fear not!” “Fear not” any 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.⁶

That is the true meaning of Christmas. That is the true message of God for you, in Jesus. When confronted by God’s presence and God’s Word don’t run away. The shepherds ran to Bethlehem to encounter flesh and blood, the Savior, lying in an humble manger. You can do the same.

Your “Bethlehem” is here on this holy table. Here lies your Savior’s body and blood mangled in humble bread and wine. Here He is, for you. A Savior who is Christ the Lord. As the shepherds looked into His face and found peace so you too can find true peace. That is the true meaning of Christmas.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

