

Christmas Eve
“The Angels’ Song” Luke 2:8-14
December 24, 2024
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it has been a great joy and strengthening of our faith as we have heard in these past three weeks of Advent, the God inspired, Holy Spirit filled songs of praise of Zacharias, Elizabeth and Mary. We thank Pastor Goetz for leading us to remember anew their special stories, hear their messages of Good News and apply them to our lives.

In Mary’s song, we heard her praise God saying, **“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”(Luke 1:46)** She believed in the Word of God, spoken to her by the angel Gabriel, that the baby conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit was the Son of God, the Savior of the world, her Savior and our Savior.

So Elizabeth, in her song, called her “blessed” for believing in **“the fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” (Luke 1:45)**

And Zacarias, her husband, also praised God in his song by saying, **“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David” (Luke 1:68-69)**

These, of course, are the highlights and you can find the full songs in Luke chapter 1. Tonight, we turn the page to chapter 2. For Chapter 2 is the great turning point in the history of the world! To announce this pivotal defining moment in time, God sent angels from heaven with His song, the song of songs! The Gloria in Excelsis!

This song we have refrained from singing during the Advent season, as we do also in the Lenten season. Why? Because we look forward to singing it tomorrow morning to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus in our communion service! We heard this Hymn of Praise in our Gospel reading and I read it again.

**13 And 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, goodwill toward men!”**

Glory, peace, goodwill! Lowly shepherds were first privileged to hear these beautiful words from the angels. It became their song! And it is our prayer this night that they become your song and mine to the glory and praise of God.

It was a normal night out in the fields with the flock. Normal working people doing their calling...living out in the fields in whatever shelters they had constructed. Eating, sleeping, taking turns watching over the flock. Think 4-H people, Eagle scouts...most likely young people who were physically able to rough it, like the youngest son of Jesse, David.

But, suddenly the baa baa sounds of sheep were interrupted with the voice of an angel of the Lord. He brought a message directly from heaven, from God Himself. And the glory of the Lord shone around all the shepherds.

You can imagine their reaction. Scripture tells us their reaction. They were greatly afraid. For in that moment, the darkness of the sinfulness of this world was pierced by the holy glory of God, reflected also in the presence of one of God's messengers. When one is confronted with God's glory, one immediately becomes aware of one's own unholiness.

But, God had waited for this moment ever since Adam and Eve had first sinned in the country of the Garden of Eve, to bring to fulfillment what He had first promised them... the Descendent of Eve who would crush the serpents head.

This night He is born said the angel. **"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."**

Yes, the angel's message takes away any fear, for it is all Good News! It is a great joy for not just the shepherds but for all people! It takes away any and all fears that we have this night that our Savior was born, who is Christ the Lord.

They were told to go find **a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger,**" All the angels of heaven looked forward for this day. And suddenly a great multitude of the heavenly host appeared praising God with their song.

**"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"**

So John wrote in chapter 1 which we will hear tomorrow morning.

“We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The disciples saw glimpses of Jesus’ glory as He performed miracles, when He was transfigured and when He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

Yes, this Baby was born to die. For they also saw the cruelty of this world gathered around Him as Jesus allowed them to crucify Him. He hid His glory and didn’t use His power, so that this sinless one born in Bethlehem could take upon Himself the unholiness of this world in Jerusalem.

God was glorified by this great act of love for all people...that the Son of God would become one of us to save us...that the Son of God would be born as a baby just like us, humbly born. Who could fear a baby? ...that Jesus would humbly serve us, beginning in a lowly manger and finishing on a cruel cross. Yes, the babe of Bethlehem was the Shepherd who would give His life on the cross for the sins of the world. And rise again in glory to show His complete victory!

And what does that mean for us? It means that you who trust in Jesus, also will be glorified. Your sins are forgiven now and one day you will be changed to be like Jesus. Listen to Philippians 3:21 and hear this good news.

“we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

“Glory to God in the highest” means that Jesus is your Savior and we give all glory to Him that we will also be transformed to be like Him!

Yes, first the angels give glory to God for Jesus’ coming to be our Savior. And then they tell the world that His coming brings peace on earth. What kind of peace is this? For there are still wars and conflicts and hate and grieving and suffering. These continue to plague us and haven’t changed since Jesus’ coming. That is true.

But in all this darkness of sin, Jesus gives peace to the world, to all people in the midst of these tribulations. Listen to Jesus tell us of this peace in John 16:33.

“33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Of what peace do the angels sing? How did Jesus overcome the world? Listen to Colossians 2 and rejoice!

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” So Romans 5:1 tells us the Good News that we have peace with God! There is no greater peace!

This was all God’s “good will towards men” that the angels sang of. His decision. His choice to send His Son in to the world for us! Listen to Ephesians 1!

“7 In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,”

Mary rejoiced in God’s good merciful will to all generations! Elizabeth rejoiced! Zacarias rejoiced! This Gospel message became their song. And after hearing it, the shepherds found the baby Jesus just as the angels had said. They saw Him and believed in Him.

And then guess what they did? They took the angels’ song and made it their own! **“they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” Luke 2:17-18**

With eyes of faith, believe the Good News sung by the angels, proclaimed by the shepherds and make it your song also. Give all glory to God. Make the message of Christmas widely known. You have heard it and by the power of the Holy Spirit, sing it, here, tell it everywhere! Jesus, the Savior of the world is born! Merry Christmas! Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)