

Christmas Eve – 2021
12-24-21

“Glory to God in the Highest” Luke 2:14

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our text for this Christmas Eve night is the beautiful refrain that we just sang in the hymn “Angels we have heard on high” from our Gospel reading from Luke 2:14.

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

Yes, we just sang the Latin version together - “Gloria in excelsis Deo”. Whether we sing it in Latin, or in English - “Glory to God on high”, or in Spanish – “Gloria a Dios en lo alto”, we take a deep breath of air and try to sing the whole phrase in one breath, and give all glory to God!

Well, the angels didn’t have any breathing difficulties! They couldn’t contain their excitement and joy! They’d been waiting for this moment since God first promised Adam and Eve that a Savior would come.

God’s glory broke through the heavens when Jesus was born in Bethlehem! Luke says,

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.”

God chose to first announce the birth of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, to humble shepherds watching over their flock by night. As the glory of the Lord filled the sky, the shepherds were awestruck and filled with fear. Their breath was taken away! They didn’t immediately start singing “Gloria in excelsis Deo” in one breath!

They needed their pulse rate and breathing to normalize. And that's exactly what the angel's message of Good News did for them.

We finished the Advent season on Wednesday night by sing "Lift up your heads ye mighty gates" that's based on Psalm 24.

**Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.**

**Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.**

The Newborn King, Jesus, came to destroy the serpent of old, the devil and crush his head as God had promised Adam and Eve. Jesus was strong and mighty by paying for all our sins in the battle on the cross.

The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep to protect them from the wolf. It makes perfect sense that the angels would sing the good news of birth of the Savior to shepherds. For no longer would sheep be needed to be sacrificed to remind people of their sins and point them to the coming Savior.

No! As we heard on Sunday from Hebrews 10,

**"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.
6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.
7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.' "**

This body was prepared, grew for 9 months inside of Mary's womb and was now born in Bethlehem! Glory to God in the Highest!!!

The King of glory has entered our world to do God's will – to battle for us! Do not fear! Psalm 24 asks,

**10 Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory!**

Jesus is the Lord of all the heavenly host, of all the angels who serve Him by announcing to the world His plan of salvation for all mankind. You no longer need to fear for the punishment of your sins.

The angels said,

“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

For all people! For all of us sinners gathered together this evening, the angel’s good tidings are for you! And your hearts sing, “Glory to God in the highest” for He has personally rescued me!

You do not need to fear the presence of God’s glory as Moses did in the Old Testament, for God’s glory comes to you humbly wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Go to Bethlehem and see!

The humbly born Christ child would humbly ride into Jerusalem on a donkey to take away the sins of the world. This is how the King of glory hid His glory to accomplish our salvation and glorify His Father!!! Glory to God in the Highest!

Paul says it this way as he opens his letter to the Galatians in verses 4-5.

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

“Glory to God in the Highest” sing the angels as they tell of this peace and goodwill to men that Jesus brings. For His wooden manger would become a wooden cross on which He would make peace with God, reconcile the world of their sins and make peace between man and God.

It’s all God’s doing! He brings us this most precious of gifts to us this night and always. All glory to God in the highest! And our breath is taken away as we contemplate His goodness to me, a poor sinful being!

And as we look into that manger with the Shepherds with eyes of faith we behold in wonderment, God with us, Immanuel! We are not alone ever! Our Good

Shepherd has come. There is no need to fear, during pandemics or when things finally get back to normal.

Mary and Joseph couldn't find a room. The baby was coming! Ready or not here I come. When a baby is ready to be born, there's no stopping it. Did Mary and Joseph have fear that God would not provide for them? No, this was all part of God's good plan.

Caesar Augustus unknowingly fulfilled Scripture so that Mary and Joseph would travel to little, humble Bethlehem as foretold in Micah 5. God's in control always! You can count on it. His ways are above our understanding. And Jesus was born in a humble manger and visited by humble shepherds who then did what?

Luke tells us.

“Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”

Their fear was gone. They had heard, seen and believed in the Christ Child. And now they gave glory and praise to God. Glory to God in the Highest! Their lungs drew deep breaths of joy and sang praises to God for the gift of salvation!

The angel's message is for you this day. Fear not. Christ was born, died and raised for your salvation! Your Good Shepherd is coming again in all glory to bring you to heaven for you have received His message with faith.

Give all glory to God in the highest from your heart with your praises! And make known what you have seen so that others may give glory to God also!

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

