

Text: Luke 2:9-11

Title: "Christmas without fear"

Time: 12/2/2020 am

Place: TCS chapel

Introduction: I would like to begin this morning with a little Bible I. Q. test. There is something we all have in common, something we all face but in different ways in each of our lives. The lives of Bible characters each faced this as well in different ways.

My I. Q. test is to see if you can guess what it is that I am referring to as I give you some of these examples from Bible characters. What is this challenge in life that takes on different forms for each of us? Here is the challenge in the many different forms it took the lives of Bible characters:

For Abraham, it was his childlessness and what that meant for the future of his household (Gen. 15:1).

For Hagar, it was her inability to keep Ishmael alive after Sarah expelled her (Gen. 21:17).

For Isaac, it was whether God would be with him like He had been with Abraham (Gen. 26:24).

For Jacob, it was the need to move his household to Egypt (Gen. 46:3).

For Moses and Israel, it was the approaching Egyptian army while trapped at the Red Sea (Exod. 14:13).

For Joshua, it was the need to make a second attempt to defeat Ai after failing the first time (Josh. 8:1).

For Gideon, it was the possibility of dying from seeing an angel (Judg. 6:23).

For Ruth, it was the thought of rejection from Boaz (Ruth 3:11).

For David, it was the threat of Saul's desire to kill him (1 Sam. 23:17).

For Mephibosheth, it was the possibility that David would seek revenge (2 Sam. 9:7).

For Solomon, it was the responsibility of becoming king on the throne of his father (1 Chron. 28:20).

For Solomon's son, it was an unknown sudden danger or the destruction of the wicked (Prov. 3:25).

For the widow of Zarephath, it was the starvation of herself and her son (1 Kings 17:13).

For Elisha's young servant, it was the angry Syrian army (2 Kings 6:16).

For Ezekiel, it was the hard hearts of Israel (Ezek. 3:9).

For Daniel, it was delayed answer to prayer (Dan. 10:12).

For Joseph, it was to take pregnant Mary as his wife (Matt. 1:20).

For Mary, it was the lofty things the angel said about her (Luke 1:20).

For the Christmas shepherds, it was the appearance of the glory of the Lord from the angel of the Lord in the field on Christmas night (Luke 2:10).

So what is it that took all these different forms in the lives of these Bible characters? What is it that is the same in all of these examples? It's fear. In each and every case I have listed (and many others could be added), the circumstance is something that is causing fear in the life of the person mentioned. In every single one of these passages, God takes the time to tell someone He loves to "fear not."

What is your fear? What are you afraid of this morning?

There was one Bible example of fear that spoke especially to my heart about a kind of fear that I sometimes experience.

In Luke 5 Jesus tells Peter to go cast their fishing nets one more time, and Peter responds with exasperation: "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."

Of course, the catch was so great that their nets broke. And as Peter pulls himself on to shore, he is struck with guilt over the way he had spoken to Jesus. He falls at Jesus's feet and says to Him, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Peter was afraid that he was too sinful for Jesus to forgive and to use as His disciple. He feared that he was too sinful to serve His Lord. Jesus recognized this fear in Peter and said to him lovingly and reassuringly, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." And so Peter did.

So there are many things that can make us afraid, but I was reminded by the courage of a dear brother that the truth of Christmas is in part a message that conquers fear. His name is Tom Jackson, and he is the new director of Camp Northfield, MA. Because of a new order from the governor of that state, Brother Tom had to cancel the Christmas banquets they were planning at the Camp. The cancellations meant a great loss of blessing and needed revenue as well for the ministry there.

But it was striking to me to read how Tom concluded his letter announcing those cancellations: "We trust that you all have a great time of thanksgiving, and a Merry Christmas as you reflect on the birth of our Savior. Luke 2:10 says, 'Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people' - this year has been hard, but trust in Him, and fear not! What an incredible God we serve!"

Those courageous lines are the inspiration for my message this morning. I want us to focus for our remaining time on the good news of great joy from the angels to the shepherds in Luke 2:8-11.

The angel tells the shepherds to fear not, and then he tells them why they do not have to be afraid. I want us to hear them say that to us this morning: "Fear not what is making you afraid, and here's why not." Let's look, one phrase at a time, at the reason in verse 11 why we need not fear.

I. "For unto you is born" (v. 11a).

Illustration: Maureen and I were blessed with the birth of three beautiful babies, each one a tremendous blessing from the Lord to our lives. After each was born, we were given a bracelet that matched that of our child to make sure that the hospital could keep track for us of who belonged to whom. Knowing to whom the baby was born is very important.

Application: When we think of the birth of Christ, we normally think of the miracle of His being born to the virgin Mary. We think too of Joseph as the father who helped to raise this baby. We correctly say that Jesus was born to Joseph and Mary, his parents.

But here the angel is not talking to Mary or to Joseph when he says, "Unto you is born." He is talking to the shepherds, whose names we do not know. The birth of Jesus was unlike any other birth. Every other birth of a baby is a birth to the baby's parents. But Jesus's birth was a birth to His parents, and to the shepherds, and to you and I as well. His is a birth, "which shall be to all people" (v. 10).

The angels tell the shepherds that the reason they need not be fearful is that a baby has been born to them. We do not have to be afraid, because Jesus was born to us. Even more to my point, you do not have to be afraid, and the reason why is that Jesus was born to you. There is a sense in which the Child born that night is your baby and mine.

John 3:16 explains this sense: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

II. "this day in the city of David" (v. 11b).

Application: The angel references the time and place of Jesus's birth. The city of David is, of course, Bethlehem. Daniel prophesied the day of Jesus's birth with his 70-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9, and Micah prophesied the place, and they did so hundreds of years before the birth happened.

Illustration: *The Book of Mormon* illustrates how hard it is to get a detail like this right even hundreds of years after it happened, let alone hundreds of years before. It has a section called "Alma" in it, and in Alma 7:10 it says of the Son of God, "And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers." That is clearly a mistaken contradiction to the teaching of Scripture.

I asked a Mormon elder at my door once about that verse, and he tried to explain to me that in the ancient Egyptian (a language no longer extant) the word *at* means *in the region of*. So he explained that because Bethlehem is in the region of Jerusalem there is no contradiction.

I asked him where else that word means *in the region of*, and his response made apparent that he had no true knowledge of the word's usage in the supposed ancient Egyptian text. Then I explained to him how that saying, "Jesus was born in the region of Jerusalem," misses the whole point of the true Scripture prophecy about the birthplace of Jesus.

Micah 5:2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose go-

ings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Jerusalem was large in Judah. Bethlehem was little. The littleness of Bethlehem in contrast to Jerusalem is a key point of the prophecy. The *Book of Mormon* simply gets the place wrong hundreds of years after the event took place.

Yet when the angel tells the shepherds, “this day in the city of David,” he speaks of the birth of Jesus on the exact day predicted by Daniel, and in the exact place predicted by Micah, both hundreds of years before it happened. His birth was the miracle of fulfilled ancient prophesy.

And so that is another reason why we do not have to be afraid. Fear not—Jesus was born exactly when and exactly where the ancient prophets said He would be. We do not have to be afraid because supernatural omnipotence is at work in the birth that was a birth to us. The Child born to us was God’s miraculous fulfilment of ancient promises.

III. “a Savior” (v. 11c).

Application: The baby miraculously born to you and to me is a Savior, and that is why we do not have to be afraid.

Without a Savior, we have much to fear. Without a Savior, our holy God is a terror to us. Without a Savior, the righteous law that we have broken in sin is a terror that justly condemns us. Without a Savior, the bondage of the fear of the death and the hell we deserve is a terror to us.

That terror characterizes the unsaved world we live in today. Our world is a place of bondage under the fear of death. But listen to how the author of Hebrews describes the significance of the birth of this Christmas Child: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and

blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15).

The angels tell the shepherds, “Fear not – Jesus is the Savior.” You can stand before your holy God with a Savior. You can be forgiven for your violations of His righteous law with a Savior. You can overcome the bondage of the fear of death and hell with a Savior.

This passage from Hebrews tells us that Jesus saves from death through death. He is the Savior because He is God’s Son who became man to take our place under God’s judgment of our sin on the cross. He was born to be a Savior. He was born to die for your sins and for mine. Are you without a Savior this morning? Then you have much to fear. Are you with Jesus your Savior? Then fear not.

IV. “who is Christ the Lord” (v. 11d).

Application: Christ means *Anointed One*, and it is the title of Jesus that refers to His three offices as the mediator between the Father and those He saves. In the Old Testament, priests, prophets, and kings were all anointed ones. For those who have Jesus Christ as their Savior, He is their priest whose sacrifice atones for their sin; He is their prophet whose word they hear and obey (remember the Mount of Transfiguration: “Hear Him!”); and He is their King who reigns over their hearts and lives.

Jesus is all those things because He is their Lord. The angel of the Lord spoke to the shepherds. The glory of the Lord shown round about the shepherds. And the baby who was

born to you and me that night was Christ, the Lord. Does your Savior have enough glory to also be your Lord? If not, there has been a terrible mistake, because this Savior is not your savior. You must have the wrong one.

Conclusion: And so this is why the angels could tell the shepherds, "Fear not." This is the only reason. It is the only way we can have a Christmas without fear as well. The account goes on to tell how the shepherds conquered their fear, came with haste to worship the baby, spread abroad the good news that His birth was for all people, and returned to their fields glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen. Clearly, they stopped being afraid. Theirs was a Christmas without fear. That is what the birth of Jesus did for them. It gave them their Savior and Lord. He was born to you too.

So again, of what are you afraid? Fear not. Go to Him in haste, worship Him, trust Him, proclaim Him, and glorify Him as your Savior, Christ, and Lord. Give Him your fear.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching