

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Stand Alone

PART

1

TITLE

For Unto You Is Born This Day

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:8-14



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You want to turn with me to Luke chapter 2. We're just going to actually focus on one verse, but we're going to read just a few others. For those of you who are guests of Providence and family members of those who call Providence their home, we want to welcome you. We really are glad you're here this morning and are grateful that you made this time a part of your family celebration.

We always think it's important to gather and to hear God, what God's Word says to us. Even on a day like this, it really is important for us to hear from him. There's a lot of things that we can say to each other to give hope, and to console, and to give peace and joy to each other, but there is nothing like the Word of God that can feed and that can satisfy, and that can console our heart. Luke chapter 2 is where we're at.

We're a group also that's very convinced that we really are desperately in need of hearing from God's Word. There's a lot of people who see the Bible, and sometimes we read it, and there's I think a lot of people in our culture who even read it as if it's a book among many. The fact is it is a book, but it is not among many. It is the book, because it's the Word of God. When we read this book, we don't sit over it evaluating it. We sit under it to believe it. I think it's really important that you understand that, because Christ is one that has offered us such a gift in the Bible. I want to ask that we would pray first, okay. If you would, join me.

Father, as we come to read your Word here in Luke chapter 2, a story that we even read last night, Lord, a story that for many of us in the room we have heard and read many, many times over, I pray, Father, that you would help just the simplicity of the story of Christmas, Lord, to be etched deep into our heart, into our consciousness this morning. I pray, Father, that you would give us, Lord, just a fresh set of eyes to be able to see. But God, most importantly we pray that you would help us to believe it. God, your Word tells us very, very clearly that we cannot believe it unless you by the work of your Spirit help us to believe it, so I pray that you would do that. Would you be our teacher and our guide, we pray in Christ's name, amen.

In verse 8, it says, "And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, and they were 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 great fear. 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." Verse 11, "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!"

You know, it's interesting to me when you look through our culture at the idea of angels how caring, and careful, and cuddly, and safe an angel is sort of shown in our culture. If you go to any bookstore where they sell figurines, if you find one that's an angel, it's not one that brings terror to you normally. It's one that you put in your windowsill so that you look at it and you feel comfortable. They're unassuming. They're kind. They're soft. They're not terrifying, and yet when you look and you read the scriptures, it's everything that every time an angel appears in the Bible, somebody thinks they're going to die because they're afraid.

Even in this Christmas story where there's a lot of accounts where angels are showing up to different people, they all begin their appeal of what they came to say with the same thing, and that is, "Don't fear," or, "Fear not. Do not be afraid." Angels were terrifying, and the reason is because in the Old Testament every time an angel appeared, they were either bringing a message from God or judgment from God.

Just imagine, right, the sensory overload of these poor shepherds. We call them blessed, but the first experience or feeling they had at Christmas was not one of delight. It says that they were greatly afraid. None of us likes to be afraid. When that adrenaline starts to course through our arms and our veins, and our heart's pumping, and we're terrified, like we are terrified, no one looks back on that and says, "You know, I really want to do that again." We read the story and like, "Oh, they were afraid. What a great story." No, they were terrified.

Imagine these shepherds, the overload in their emotions that took place when the one angel from the Lord was not just replaced but added to that angel was a multitude of heavenly hosts. Now, sometimes we read things into the words in the Bible. We read the word host and we think, "What's a host?" A host, it's a church choir, robes, singing well, lots of people, harmony. It sounds good. That's what we think of when we think of hosts. Did you know that the word host, it literally means army?

What you need to think about, okay, you have these shepherds. It's nighttime. They've been awake all day working with sheep. They're tired. One angel shows up and says, "You're not going to believe this good news," and the news is so good that God sends an army. Think battle armor, swords. All of a sudden, these shepherds look up and there is a host, an army of angels who is there singing praise to God and announcing the birth of Christ.

But it's interesting, this armor doesn't do what most of us think what an army does. They didn't come to fight. God assembled not a choir. He assembled an army to come and make an announcement, and the announcement was that the ultimate champion, the ultimate conquering hero, that he was coming in order to begin the rescue mission for all humanity.

In verse 11, he says, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." I just want to show you two things in that verse, and then we're going to sing and enjoy the rest of this day with the Lord and with each other.

The first is this, is Jesus Christ came on a real day in a real city. "For unto you this day." This day. God created days we're told. On the fourth day, he created the sun and the moon, and then he said, "Let them be for signs and seasons and for days and years." In other words, God, he didn't have to do it this way. He didn't have to create us to sleep. He didn't have to section off segments of our life into days, but he did. He chose that for us. He organized a human life in a number of days.

You think about a day. Each side of our days contains bookends called sleep. We wake up from sleep, and then we live for a number of hours, and then we get too tired and we have to go to sleep again. When we wake up, we call what we just went through yesterday a day. A day. These blocks of time, they literally become the canvas of life that holds all of our memories.

Right now, just where you're at, I want you to think about maybe two or three of your worst days of your life. I want you to think of two or three of the best days of your life, those memories that are just, "That was a great day." Isn't it amazing that God organized life so that just a window of time that he called a day, it contains all of our memories, and some of those memories are so intense in one direction of pain or the other that they become memorable for the rest of our life.

You see, what's amazing to me when you read this, you think, "Why are you making such a big deal about a day?" is because God chose to work inside this limitation, on this day. He says, "I know I created you to live days, and I'm going to do my work to redeem you in one of those days just like you have to live." On this day, the Savior was born.

This was not a once upon a time kind of day. Luke chapter 2 verse 1 says that this was a Caesar was emperor kind of day, a historical day. But it wasn't just a day. It was also a city. It says that, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David." This was a real city, a real place on the map. This isn't Narnia. This isn't Middle Earth. This is Bethlehem, a real place in real space and time, six miles exactly from the center of Jerusalem.

Now, why is this important that you're speaking about, "For unto you this day is born in this city"? I think there's three things that I just want to say. Number one, I think it's here for us to remind us that God keeps his promises. He keeps his promises. Micah chapter 5 verse 2 says, "But you, O Bethlehem, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel." God promised that on a day the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and he was. There's a lot of promises in the Bible that we read, and one of the reasons I think verse 11 is there is to help us to be convinced that every one of those promises that he said that he is going to fulfill in our life, is that they will come to pass.

I think the second reason why this is so important of a day in time and space is to remind us that our faith is built on actual events in time and space. This is not a make believe story. This is a day in history and a place in this world that you can go to today.

The third thing I think that's so encouraging is this reminds us that God has the power to turn the tide of our brokenness and our hopelessness in a single day. Think about this for a second. You and I work and operate and live in a series of days. This is the only day that you can control. You really can't control it, but you have more control over this day than you do yesterday, right, or tomorrow. This is the day that you get to live.

Isn't it amazing that in all the brokenness that we experience in life, God on one of those days says, "I can turn the tide of human brokenness in one of these days," that he said, "I'm going to build life around these things called days." It's an amazing thing.

Some of you right now, you feel sour, you feel broken. Maybe your marriage is in shambles. Maybe your child is walking away from the Lord. Maybe you're in financial ruin. One of the cool things about the Lord is he has the power to turn the tide in a single day, so you can look to him in hope. You can trust his promises. Jesus Christ came on a real day to a real city.

The second and last point is Jesus Christ came as our Savior and Lord. Verse 11 again, "For unto you this day is born in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord." The news of pregnancy, for many of us in here, we've had that news that you're going to be a parent. What parents inevitably do at that very moment or soon thereafter is they go through the process of choosing and selecting the best name for this child. We do all kinds of things. We look at the Bible for names. We look at our family for names. We look at our favorite names. We look at odd spelling. I shouldn't say odd. For you it's not odd, right? For all the rest of us, it's odd. "You spell it that way? All right, whatever." Because it's going to be a unique child, so we want to spell it in a unique way. Like there's a lot of ways that we go about naming our child, and that's a great thing.

What we don't normally do is select a name that's synonymous with that child's life purpose, and the reason is because we don't know what their life purpose is going to be. We don't name our kids engineer, because I'm just convinced that one day this child is going to be an engineer. Yet God, it was totally different with Jesus, because he's a different kind of baby. We even read last night Matthew chapter 1 verse 21, God gave Jesus a name, and there was a reason behind it, a life purpose. He says, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." This is what he's saying here in Luke chapter 2, "For unto you is born this day a Savior." This is his life. This is why he came. This is why he came, to rescue us.

It's interesting that he says it's to save us from our sins. If you think about this for a second, only God can forgive sins that have been sinned against God. I mean if you have a debt with God, I can't come into the middle of that and say, "Hey, by the way, God forgives you." God has to do that. God has to be the one to say, "I forgive you what you did to me." I don't have the authority. No human has the authority. This is why God sent his son to the earth. This is why his son while he was on the earth says that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, that Jesus as God could come to this earth as the representative and say, "I recognize and I see that you sinned against me and against my Father, and I forgive you." Those words, they were authoritative. They meant something because they came from the mouth of God.

When you think about Jesus being Savior, and the Christ, and the Lord of all, there's different ways for us to respond to this news, isn't there? In a text that we read last night in Matthew chapter 2, if you guys remember, the wise men. The wise men, they come from the east. They're Gentiles. They're very educated, most likely very, very wealthy. They show up, and they don't show up at Jesus' door. They show up at Herod's door. They say, "We want to know where the Christ, where is the Messiah to be born." All of a sudden, Herod gets really uptight. It says that he was troubled. We've looked at the word troubled of recent weeks in John when Jesus felt troubled going to the cross or at least going to Jerusalem. There's a stirring in his conscience. Herod was not happy to hear the news of Jesus.

Well, Herod goes to some of his priests and says, "I need you to do a little survey, a little search in the scriptures. Where is the Messiah to be born?" Well, they go off, and they study, and they come back, and they said, "He's supposed to be born in Bethlehem." Herod says to them, "Well, listen. It's in Bethlehem. It's about six miles from here. This is where you need to go." What's amazing is these wise men, they then travel. The star leads them over to the house, and all of a sudden they give the gifts, and it says that they bow in worship before a baby.

You see three different responses to Jesus in the story of Christmas, and those same three responses are true of you and me and every person who hears the gospel today. You see, some people at the name and the news of Jesus Christ, they're like Herod. They consider themselves the master of their faith, the protector of their turf. When someone says Jesus is willing and wants to be your Lord, that doesn't seem very attractive to some people. You see, Herod lived his entire life looking over his shoulder, who was going to take his authority, who was going to take from him what he was thinking he had built for himself. He was one that really represents an audience in the world today that's hostile to the news of Jesus.

The second is the priests. It's interesting. They too thought that they were the masters of their faith, didn't they? They thought that they could earn their way to God. Now, this is amazing to me. Here is a group of people that their entire life purpose is to wait and to teach about the coming Messiah and to teach the law that points to the Messiah, and wise men from the east come and say, "We have come to worship him. Where is he born?" and they go, and they do their search, they give the answer, and that was that. None of them went to Bethlehem to check it out. They represent a second audience, and that's those who are indifferent to the news about Jesus.

Some people today, you share the gospel with them and it's going to be a red light. They're going to be hostile to someone wanting to be their Lord. Some people, they just will see Jesus as totally inconsequential. They're just indifferent to Jesus. They're indifferent to the gospel. But then there's a third group, and that's the Gentiles in the story, the wise men, these grown, educated, wealthy men who have traveled an enormous distance. They see a baby, and they bow before him and worship.

There's three and only three responses to the news of Jesus: we grow hostile to Jesus, we grow indifferent to Jesus, or we worship Jesus. By way of application, I just want to encourage us, let's bow to Christ and allow his peace to rule our lives. Do you see what the angels said at the very end? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased." These two things, they're always two sides of the same coin in the Bible, his glory, our peace. His glory and our peace. Who enjoys this peace? He says those with whom he is pleased. How is God pleased?

Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we've been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, when we believe in Jesus, his righteousness is counted by God as our own, giving us peace with God. He takes away our sin when we believe in Jesus, and he gives us his righteousness. This creates, as it says in this verse, peace with God through Jesus Christ.

What's interesting though is that his grace then frees us from this paralyzing guilt and shame, and this leads to peace with ourselves. You see, some of us, we may have peace with God but we don't feel peace with ourselves because we don't practice. We don't actually put into place what God has made available to us. But all the shame and guilt that you feel, that when you're right with God, then God invites you to let that go so that you can be at peace with yourself. Some of you, it's been a long time since you've been at peace with yourself.

Psalms 32 verse 1 says, "How blessed is the man or woman whose sins are forgiven." To have a clean conscience, a clear conscience that you can look yourself in the mirror and say, "I'm not ashamed of you, and I'm not ashamed of you because Jesus has taken away all my sin and has given me all of his righteousness."

You know what's interesting. When we're at peace with God and when we're at peace with ourselves, that also allows us to be at peace with others, and this can be really important at Christmas, because Christmas connects us to some odd family relationships at times and some painful relationships at times. Sometimes, you're brought near to people in your life, there were things maybe a little bit fractured, and you know what to do that leads to peace. Maybe you just don't want to. Sometimes, there's those odd, broken, painful relationships, then really you're just baffled. You do not know what to do in order to bring peace.

But the point is this, is that as you and I cultivate a sense of amazement at the grace of God that gives us peace, that allows us to be at peace with ourselves, then we are then permitted to extend that grace, and that mercy, and that gratitude to forgiving one another. This is the only hope that we have to be at peace with fellow man on this earth, friends and family. It first comes that we have to be at peace with ourselves, and the only way to be at peace with ourselves ultimately is to be at peace with God, and this is what he's made available to us in Jesus Christ.

You know, the other good news is that these shepherds were told later on that they had to take this news and they had to share it with others. This is what always happens. When we're at peace with God, and we're at peace with ourself, and then we're at peace with others, we're inclined to want to share the source of all of that peace with other people. What this does is it gives us an opportunity as a church family to be able to extend this love, and this grace, and truth of Jesus Christ to the people in this world.

Next week will be the 1st of January. It'll be an opportunity once again to start a new year. I just want to encourage you, one of the things that we're praying for us as a church family this next year is that each one of us, each one of us, will have the opportunity to share the gospel and lead somebody to faith in him and to extend that peace to others. We really are glad that you came. If you would, let's bow and let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we are grateful that you came on a real day to a real city, and you came as Savior, and you came as Lord. God, I pray for those who are here today who may be hostile to what I've just said, may be resistant, not seeing why Jesus is so important, and hearing that he is maybe makes the heart churn a little bit. I pray, God, that you would, Lord, be gracious. I pray also for those that maybe hear this and want to yawn, feel indifferent to this kind of news that Jesus can give us peace. I pray, Father, that you would warm the heart towards the reality, towards the miracle of the Christmas story.

God, I pray for each one of us in this room, God, that you would incline our hearts today and every day to bow our knee to you and to allow your peace to rule in our hearts. God, we love you. We are so grateful. Our hearts are full of joy today because of Jesus, and we want to sing about it. We pray, God, that you would be pleased with the worship, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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