

Text: Luke 2:10-16  
Theme: "Fear Not..."

December 24, 2018

"Merry Christmas" and, "Fear not." The first part of that greeting sounds appropriate and fitting, but the other part seems out of place, unnatural, and rather strange on this Christmas Eve. Yet, as we will see, it's an appropriate greeting, when it's followed by the comforting words, "A Savior has been born for you. He is Christ, the Lord!" On this Christmas Eve, I invite you to journey with me as we consider this unnatural greeting, and the comfort that follows those words to this very day.

I. The first words to the shepherds on that Christmas night were, "Fear not." A. As you sit here on this Christmas Eve, what are your greatest fears? 1. When we give that question careful thought, one of our greatest fears is fear of the future. We don't know what's going to happen and we would give almost anything to know. Those shepherds tending their flocks had those same fears. They didn't know what tomorrow would bring. They had no idea that the angel was going to appear and no idea what would occur next month or next year. Like those shepherds, we find ourselves fear-filled and in need of the greeting, "fear not," because we want to know, but don't know the future.

2. Another fear that tops our lists is fear of the unknown. How many of those shepherds knew what was going to happen next, had a clue about their health, or what crisis would occur next? Like those shepherds, "fear not," is an appropriate greeting for us because we are fearful of the unknown. We want God to tell us. We're convinced that if God would explain certain events, it would all make sense, and life would be good. It may be Christmas Eve, but we want to know what we want to know. We want to know what God knows is best we don't know. Because God doesn't fill in all the missing blanks, we sit here tonight fearful of the unknown.

3. We will add one more major fear to our list - fear that we will be forgotten by God. Did those shepherds have the words of comfort we have? Did they have access to the Bible on computer, or the Bible app? With their limited information, they carried a fear that God had forgotten His promise, that the Savior would never arrive. Tonight, we have those words of comfort. Yet, deep within, there's that lingering fear that we might not make it, that God might stop loving us because we have failed Him so many times. "Fear not" may seem like a strange greeting, but we need those words so that we can make room for those words of comfort and joy.

B. As we seek to suppress our fears, we look at the words in our text that follow, "Fear not." 1. "Fear not for I bring you good news." The shepherds and the entire community for that matter, needed some good news. The census was a headache, an inconvenience, an edict that displaced people from their routines, and their livelihoods. In our world, good news is tough to find. Turn on FOX or CNN or even your local news. Which is more prevalent every day, the good or the bad? Tonight, the angel speaks to your heart and mine, "I have good news, great news, the best news ever! It isn't momentary, but eternal. It will affect you for the rest of your life!"

2. "Fear not" is followed by, "I bring you good news of great joy." The census wasn't news of great joy. Every family knew what the census meant. Caesar wasn't counting to distribute Christmas presents, but to levy higher taxes, to make the

poor even poorer. On this Christmas Eve, the angel says to us, "I have news of great joy, news that will enable you to rise above your current situations, news that will reach the heart and create a lasting joy, news that will bring a joy beyond any temporary joy you find in your world!" Joy-filled news - we need a lot of that. In this broken world, we need news of great joy, news of lasting joy, news of an eternal joy.

3. "Fear not" is followed by the words, "That will be for all the people." Most of you already know that shepherds weren't very well respected people, that the shepherds class was called, "no class". News of great joy may have been announced, but the shepherds were not the logical audience. For some of us here tonight, the shepherd category may be our chosen category. Why would God come to me or include me? Look at my life! Look at all my failures! God couldn't want me. Yet, as the glorious message arrived, it arrived for all people. No one omitted. This good news of great joy tonight is for all people. Therefore, it must also be for you.

4. "Fear not" is followed by the news of a Savior. We hear the age old news and it hardly registers. But imagine hearing it for the first time. Imagine being one of the shepherds as the angel said, "To you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord." On this Christmas Eve, that message comes to your heart! You may have heard it previously, but tonight the Christ Child says to you, "I am with you always. Go in My peace because I have lifted your guilt. Live life convinced you are forgiven, that I have already forgotten your mistake, that your home in heaven remains secure by faith." Tonight, that same Savior brings you that message of great joy - He is my Savior!"

5. "Fear not" is also followed by the words, "This will be a sign to you." The shepherds heard what they had waited their whole lives to hear. But God took that message one step further by offering them a sign. Tonight, we are surrounded by signs and reminders. The tree, the lights, the decorations, the symbols. God may not send an angel, yet the signs are for our benefit. Your Savior offers you proof and promises that make His message irresistible to every heart wanting good news. Wherever you see the signs, allow them to ease your fears because you possess the great news of a Savior, the great news of your eternal home in heaven.

6. "Fear not" is followed by "Let's go." The shepherds heard the news of great joy, believed it, and then, they responded by saying, "Let's go!" As those statements which follow, "fear not" bring us comfort and great joy, as they set our lives on a better path, our hearts say, "Let's go!" Instead of living behind the curtain of fear, instead of merely accepting what is thinking life can be no better, rather than going with the flow down dreariness path, our hearts encourage us to step out in faith, to step above the routine, the mundane and to live with a new perspective, to live as if that message of good news, of great joy, that message of a Savior arrived just yesterday.

7. "Fear not" may seem like a strange greeting on Christmas Eve, but it's only strange to those who lack the good news, the great joy, and the Savior. As you leave this place, take the good news, the great joy, and the Savior, and do as the angel once told those shepherds, "Fear not!" Amen.