

12-24-22: Christmas Eve

Pastor Priewe

Text: Luke 2:10,11 Theme: A Savior Has Been Born to You.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Savior born to change our world. The text for our mediation on this joyous Christmas Eve celebration is the Christmas Gospel from Luke 2, the 10th and 11th verses for emphasis. “The angel said to them, **‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.’**” (Luke 2:10,11 NIV).

That is a lifechanging, world-altering announcement. If you boil it down to just one phrase, one piece of a sentence, “*A Savior has been born to you,*” you may not find a phrase, except maybe Jesus’ words on Easter Sunday, that has ever changed the world like those words have. For centuries, the entire world recognized there was something so momentous about that day that they made it the hinge of human history, the landmark at the center of history. Everything that ever happened before that, we’ll just call “Before Christ,” and everything afterward we’ll number starting from then on, A.D., Anno Domini, Latin for “In the Year of our Lord”!

A Savior has been born to you. It’s a life-changing sentence. But here’s my question for you. Has it stopped changing you? Has it worn out? Does it still pack any punch or does it just fall on deaf ears and wind-chilled hearts, like some sort of space-holding cliché to print on greeting cards?

To be able to tell whether it has stopped changing you, we need to look back at the impact that sentence was supposed to have. Remember what the angel said, **“I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”** (Luke 2:10). Now you have to ask yourself two questions. The first is this, “Am I included in all people?” “Well yeah!” There’s only one answer to that question. If you say “no,” I’m not sure what you are or where you parked your spaceship. Of course, this is for you, and every person the world over. But do you know who the hardest person to convince of that fact is? Me! And in your life, who is it? It’s you!

I want everyone single one of you right now to take out your good old pointer finger and stick it in your own chest and say, “Me! This is for me.” It’s not often that pastor tells you that you get to be so selfish, especially on Christmas Eve of all days, but I’m giving you permission. Christmas is for me! Yeah, it’s for everyone else, but before you can worry about others, the message of Christ has to do something in your own heart!

Do you know why I know that “I” am the hardest person to convince that Christmas is for me, and for you it’s you? Because in preparing this message I finally took a moment with myself. I watched the camera footage in my brain of the last month of me dragging myself around this building moping about how busy I was and how stressed I was. And do you know what there wasn’t really that much of? Joy. There was lots of everything else, bitterness, rage, envy, distraction, selfishness, anxiety, fear, worry, stress. Are you checking your own brain footage of yourself? Got anymore to add to the list? But what about joy? Maybe a glimpse of it here or there but overall, pretty sparse!!?

That brings us to the second question you have to ask yourself, once you've come to grips with the fact that you're included in all people. "Does this good news cause you great joy? Here's what I realized. I spent the whole month preparing for the day that God sent his angel to announce good news that causes great joy for all the people, and what did I let it cause me? Everything but joy! Any of this sounding familiar to you?

If the sentence, "A Savior has been born to you," is no longer a life-changing sentence, if it no longer causes you joy, than it's time for each of us to take a moment with ourselves and remember the facts.

Fact 1) I am a sinner. You are a sinner. It's a short painful sentence, but it cuts through a whole bunch of the devil's lies spooking around in your head, like these ones, "I'm not that bad, not any worse than anybody else, in fact, probably at least a little bit better. So, I don't need much saving, maybe just a little here or there, to get me over the hump, kind of like an afternoon caffeine boost, but for the most part I can take care of myself. Or Maybe if I just get a life coach or a mentor, somebody to give me some helpful tips, that's all I really need.

No, Sinner, see that for what it is—the LIES of an enemy! "Fall on your knees, here the angel voices," (Oh Holy Night). Recognize what you are! God sent his angel to announce a "Savior" for all people. As good of news as that is, it starts with an assumption about us, a declaration that God makes about all people, about me, about you. You need saving. You are a sinner, from the soles of your feet to the hair on your head, in total need of saving or you will die forever. That's Fact Number One and Christmas won't mean a thing to you without it.

Fact 2) A Savior has been born! There's hardly ever been a more theologically packed sentence. God saw of world of you's and me's, who were going to die because of their sin, and though deeply hurt by a world lashing out against him, he didn't lash back! Instead, his heart was moved to give. His heart was moved to save, and a Savior he gave. And not just some measly pawn as a sacrifice in the game, but the King of it all, his Son, all the fullness of God in bodily form. He gave a baby whose sole purpose on this earth was to save sinners completely, from "life's first cry to final breath," (In Christ Alone, Getty and Townend), from the soles of their feet to the hair on their heads.

And in making his Son take on human flesh, he was already condemning him to death, death on a cross as the Savior for every sin of every sinner. That's the world-shaking, life changing part of the sentence. It's no wonder the great company of the heavenly hosts shook the sky after those words were spoken.

Fact 3) A Savior has been born *to you!* It's time to get your pointer finger back out and lay it softly on your heart and say those words again. "**For Me**, it's for me!" A Savior is born for me. The Savior I didn't even always want, but the one I would die without. He came for me. He left heaven for me. He suffered hell for me. He saved me. Let those truths sink in until you melt. God did this for me.

Do you know what that sensation is called? That little wave welling up inside you ... It's called Joy. When we take a good long look at the facts: our sin, God's grace, and a Savior born

to us, it changes us. This good news causes us great joy. That's just what happened for the characters in the first Christmas story.

Think first of Mary. Remember what she sang back when she first heard she was pregnant with the Son of God, "*The Holy One has done great things for me!*" In the meantime, she had a few stressful things on her mind. For one, she had to grow a human inside her body, and as if that wasn't enough, then travel 100 miles to Bethlehem like at her due date so that they, who were poor, could be taxed the right amount of money. They get there and there's no room, so out to the stable they go with the animals. And wouldn't you know it, the baby comes. Imagine the exhaustion that would have set in for her, not to mention that now she's partially responsible for making sure the Son of God keeps breathing and is warm and fed and clean out in the stable.

But the Gospel writer Luke mentions this specific detail about Mary after she had given birth, "**Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.**" (Luke 2:19) In the quietness of her soul, she took God's gift of a Son, His Son and also her son to heart, and she pondered it. I think this is where Bible gives it's answer to the long-sung question, "Mary did you know that the child you've delivered, will soon deliver you?" (Mary, Did You Know). She treasured the truths that had been spoken about her child.

Think finally about the shepherds. These are no static (unchanging) characters to the story. The shepherd sinners first shook with fear in the presence of the glory of the LORD, until the good news changed them. They ran to Bethlehem to find the Savior born for each of them, and when they had seen him, they were changed. They weren't just bored shepherds working the night shift on Christmas Eve anymore, they were joy-bearing, gospel sharing shepherds who didn't just go straight back to their sheep. They became messengers of grace with life changing news for a world around them still stuck in the dark. And their otherwise tedious lives were now filled with the meaning of having news of great joy to share! "**And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.**" (Luke 2:18)

It's my prayer that today God has once again changed me and used me as his joy-bearing, gospel sharing shepherd, after all the word pastor means shepherd. It's my prayer that the message of Christmas reaches your heart and melts it once again, as nothing else can do. A Savior born to you, the Messiah, the Lord. Finally, I pray that you don't return home the same. That you don't just go back to your family and your job, back to your stress and your griping. I pray that the message you've pondered in your heart today would fill you with the joy of the shepherds, who "**returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.**" (Luke 2:20). In Jesus's name. Amen

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, for the Almighty has done great things for me and Holy is name throughout all generations. (Mary's Song) Amen.