

Good News of Great Joy  
Luke 2: 8-20  
Psalm 95:6-7

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Pastor Doug Browne  
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Luke 2: 8-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

Psalm 95:6-7

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!  
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice!

“...the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.’”

Whenever angels speak in the Bible, I’ve found it best to listen up. They don’t appear casually, and they’re not into small talk. What they say is important enough for God to send them down here to say it. They say what they’re here to say, and they disappear.

“I am bringing you good news.”

The angel goes on, now with a lot of angels, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven.”

Jesus, the one born this day, is the Prince of Peace, the King of kings. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. God living right here in the middle of us. God seeing us as we really are, up close.

And the angel says this is good news. Good news of great joy.

The good news is that Jesus did not wait until we had everything sorted out and we were ready for Him to come. We would still be waiting.

He came when the world was profoundly messed up, when justice was a daydream and the powerful ruled brutally, without a thought for the weak.

He came when human hearts were far from pure, when religious leaders seemed to be hopelessly entangled with an oppressive government.

He came when cynicism ruled, and people who believed in moral good and evil were ridiculed in some circles as not being ready for adult responsibilities.

He came when the world was not ready for Him, and he changed the world.

The world is still changing, and slowly getting better.

Today we don't have everything sorted out. We're not ready for Jesus to come.

But here He is.

Our world is not ready for God to see. It is not ready for the Prince of Peace.

But here He is.

Here He is to bring peace. Peace in the world, and peace in our hearts.

Our own hearts are tarnished, full of sin and doubt, hurt and pain.

But here He is.

Here He is to bring healing.

Cynicism still rules parts of our world. We are still uncomfortable using words like good and evil, or sin and forgiveness.

But here He is.

Here He is to bring truth and love and to shepherd us back to where we belong.

We are not ready.

But here He is.

He sees us as we really are. Beyond the highlight reel that we show the public. Beyond the slightly or not-so-slightly airbrushed version we show friends and family. Beyond even the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves and the world around us. All the way to the most naked, most vulnerable center of who we are.

He sees us as we really are. And he loves us anyway!

He loves us.

He touches our hearts and He changes them.

And that is why, as Madeleine L'Engle said, “We cannot wait till the world is sane / to raise our songs with joyful voice, / for to share our grief, to touch our pain, / He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!”<sup>1</sup>

So, with the shepherds, ready or not, let's glorify and praise God, and pass the word. Go tell it on the mountain, indeed!

AMEN

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<sup>1</sup> Madeleine L'Engle “First Coming”.