

FEAR NOT

Luke 2:8-20 ⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² "And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" ¹⁵ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Why are the shepherds afraid?

The simple answer is that all of a sudden, the glory of the Lord shone around them. But there is a deeper truth than that. They would not have feared the angels unless the fear was already there in their hearts.

The reason that I can jump out of the bushes at night and scare my nieces and nephews is because there is already a little fear of the dark hidden in their hearts. During the day you can still startle them, but it doesn't create the fear that it does at night.

The great fear of the shepherds when the angels appear is not a momentary or isolated thing. It is the manifestation of the fear that lives in all our hearts. The fear which means that every time something bad happens in our lives there is a little voice wondering, "Is this God's punishment because of what I did the other day." The fear that causes us to erupt in anger every time someone accuses us. The fear that causes us to attempt to take on more and more responsibilities, because we are trying to prove to ourselves that we are capable.

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us

Hebrews 2:14-15 ¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

We try to ignore it and push it down but all our lives there is that seed of fear in our hearts. Fear of failure, fear of being inadequate, fear of sin, fear of death.

But if we all share the fear of the shepherds, then we also all share equally the message of the angels. "Do not be afraid." These first words that the angels speak are not a momentary message meant only for the shepherds. These words are a proclamation to the whole world, and to us this night also.

FEAR NOT, we bring to YOU joyful tidings, to YOU is born this day a SAVIOR.
For this reason, there is no longer any reason to fear ever again.
Jesus brings peace and with his peace fear is gone.

To whom is this peace given?

What is the first thing that kids do when the presents are put under the tree? They start checking the name tags. Whom is this one for? Which one is mine? They usually start with the biggest present. What name is on this tag?

Here we have the biggest present of all, peace from God. What does the name tag say? "Peace on earth goodwill towards men."

Verse 14 is sometimes translated "peace on earth goodwill towards men" and sometimes "peace on earth to men of goodwill" both translations really fail, but especially the second one.

First, the good will is not from men to God, the gift is from God to men. The direction of the goodwill is not earth to heaven but heaven to earth. It is true that "men of goodwill" is a more accurate representation of the Greek here. But the men are "of goodwill" because God has goodwill towards them. The goodwill indicates God's attitude not man's.

Eph 1:9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

Notice the "good pleasure," the goodwill, the favor is from God towards men because of His purpose. As David proclaimed:

Psalm 32:1-2 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,

Secondly the "goodwill" is descriptive not exclusive.

If I say to you "I love red Twizzlers," I am being exclusive. I love the red ones not the black ones. But If I say "I love Twizzlers candy." I am being descriptive. All Twizzlers are candy.

The angels are being descriptive here. They are not saying that God's peace is given only to those who find favor with God, they are saying all men have God's favor. God's goodwill is given because peace is given to all men through this child.

If there is any doubt that this peace is offered to all, we can look back at verse 10 "good tidings of great joy which will be to **all** people."

FEAR NOT - this peace of God, this favor, this goodwill of God is for YOU because it is for ALL.

What is the sign that we do not have to fear?

God always gives a sign with His promises. He gave Noah a sign. He gave Moses a sign. He gave Gideon a sign. He gave David a sign. Even King Ahaz received a sign. God always gives a sign with his promises. What sign does he give us that we might know that we have peace with God?

Luke 2:12 "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

The sign is a baby in a manger. This isn't much of a sign from a human perspective. It's a little odd that the baby was placed in a manger, but not really that odd. It's not much of a sign from a human view but from a divine view this sign is the greatest ever.

You can ask my wife after the service to take a look at the diamond I gave her when we were married. It's not much of a diamond but every time I offer to get her a new one a bigger one, she resists. It's not much of a diamond but to her the value isn't in the size of the diamond.

A baby in a manger is not much of a sign from a human perspective but the shepherds rush to see it. Mary treasures it always in her heart. When the shepherds leave they don't talk about the angels they talk about the child. I don't mean to say that the shepherds didn't mention the angels. But Luke makes it clear that the topic of their conversation, the thing they were excited about was not the vision of the angels but the child of Bethlehem.

From a human perspective a baby is not that great of a sign but from God's view, this is "His only begotten Son." From God's view no greater sign could he give.

**"For God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten son."
"He who did not spare his own Son but freely gave him up for us all."**

This is the same sign which God demanded of Abraham. "sacrifice your son your only son Isaac." The same sign that God demanded from Abraham he turns around and gives to us.

You want a sign that you need not fear any longer? You want proof that God's peace and favor is for YOU? There is no greater sign of God's promise than this baby

We might be jealous, the shepherds got to see angels, the wise men got to see the star. But the sign that really matters is right here. "A baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger."

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people . . . Peace on earth to all men . . . And this shall be the sign for you . . . a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."