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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
December 25, 2020  
Christmas Day

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:1-20

Hymns: 708; 94; 136; 87

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 2:10-11

<sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>11</sup>For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Facing one's fears!

That is something that is often suggested as a solution to the problem of fear. There are even specialists who offer to help people get past fears that have become paralyzing in their lives. Often the fears aren't necessarily rational, but they are almost always deep seated. For some it may be the fear of certain critters; spiders, or mice, or snakes. For others it may a fear of closed spaces, or open spaces, or being in a crowd, or in an airplane., Even though fear may serve a healthy purpose to keep people wary of danger, fear often impacts lives and even relationships negatively.

This year fear has had a tremendous impact on our society, well maybe almost every society throughout the world. The pandemic has instilled more than a healthy dose of caution into many people, even if others tend to behave recklessly. The recklessness of some intensifies the fear of others.

In our Christmas gospel we heard of the shepherds' fear, that they were greatly afraid when the angel of the Lord appeared. It was more than being startled. They were afraid. Why? The angel didn't appear before them to destroy them! It may have felt that way at first. It may have felt that way because the glory of the Lord was shining brightly around them! I believe it is safe to assume that these shepherds were devout men, but they were also still sinners being confronted with the glory of God's holiness and the glory of God's holy angels. They were **very** afraid! The angel's message to the shepherds were words of comfort that contained the power of the gospel. That message is there for us today --

### **THEME: Have No Fear! The Savior Has Been Born!**

The angel proclaimed --

#### **I. Good News for all People.**

We have had announcements of good news about vaccines a couple of times in the past several days. The world has been very excited about this news. They have even made the claim that this is good news for all the world. The credit has gone to science and that actually means to man. I haven't heard anyone on the news thank God. Some say this man or this group of men should receive the credit for the good news that we are going to beat this pandemic!

But the victory is limited. Every life that will be saved by this vaccine won't really be saved for long. Lives will be extended for a while and then death will come. It will come as surely as sin has come upon all men and death by sin. Those who fail to look to God for salvation, those who fail to give all glory to the one true God will be lost. There is reason for fear. More reason for fear than any Covid virus may present to us.

The angel speaking to the shepherds brought better news.

“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to **all** people.”

The news the angel brought was intended for **all** people. It is **good** for all people. It is absolutely **effective** for all people. But just as with the vaccine, there are many who want nothing to do with this gospel of the Babe of Bethlehem. With the vaccine many polls taken early on indicated that less than half of all people would be willing to receive the vaccine for Covid. Some people are cautious because there may be side effects and unknown after effects related to these vaccines. They may not be as safe as some say.

Just think about the world’s skepticism about the gospel. So many try to find reasons to discredit the gospel. Some say it undermines other people’s cultures, and that presenting them with the gospel is wrong, even evil. Others just don’t think it is possible for it to be effective. It goes against human reason. Still others just don’t want to hear about it, seeing the gospel as unnecessary. It would be better if they listened first to their consciences and understood there is reason to fear. It would be better if they listened to their consciences and understood there is a great need of cure for sin.

The angel’s announcement to the shepherds was good news of great joy for all people. That is for all people everywhere and all people for all time! It is good news for us yet today. There are no limits to God’s grace determined by any of the social, economic, or racial barriers, or even national boundaries. This is good news of great joy that will wipe out fear. This good news wipes out the fear of God. It wipes out the fear of death. It wipes out the fear of eternal death in hell.

How can it do all that? Many will say it is just too good to be true! The angel’s message was to the point. –

## **II. The Savior has been born!**

**Luke 2:11** “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

All the ingredients necessary for this to be the cure for sin and the fear of death were right there in the angel’s words. A Savior was

born. We needed a Savior, One who could and would deliver us from death. Jesus was born according to prophecy. The devil has spawned many fables with prophecies of saviors being born, but there is one Savior from sin death and the power of the devil who was born into the world. This Savior was born in the city of David as the Seed of David. The significance of this fact was our focus last Sunday. We needed a fully divine and yet fully human Savior to come into the world, and Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.

Now the angel emphasized that the Savior was born **to you**. Most might think that when a baby is born it is a blessing to that husband and wife. It is born into their family. It is born to them. The angel said the Savior was born to the shepherds. It was born to bless them. We hear the angel's words today, and we are right to hear that "**to you**" as being also for us. This Savior born in Bethlehem was born to YOU!

This Savior is Christ the Lord! All the prophets directed God's people to watch for the Savior who was the Promised One the Anointed One, the Messiah. This was the One who would come into the world and deliver us from fear, and deliver us from sin, and deliver us from sin's curse of death. No one else can do this. Only the Christ of God. As we today celebrate Jesus' birth, we celebrate the birth of the Christ of God. He is Christ the **Lord!**

And so the message of the angel to the Shepherds calms our troubled hearts, and makes our every fear subside. We too thrill at the message of Christmas proclaimed in the hills of Judea near Bethlehem.

"Angels from the realms of glory, Wing your flight o'er all the earth.

Ye who sang creation's story Now proclaim Messiah's birth!

Come and worship, Come and worship!

Worship Christ the new-born King!" (The Lutheran Hymnal 136:1)

**AMEN.**

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans15:13)