

Joy to the World

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I've found one of the best ways to get everyone's attention is to yell, "I have an announcement!" Whether in a crowded room or a half-empty bus, it doesn't seem to matter—this tactic works.

In the familiar nativity narrative an angel has an announcement. Under the canopy of a winter sky, with shepherds keeping watch over their flock, an angel shows up. He has something to say to the shepherds. And he gets their attention with his presence and also the presence of the glory of the Lord shining around him ([Lk. 2:9](#)).

The angel comes with a clear, compelling, and concise message. It has three points; and it forms the perfect Christmas card.

"And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." ([Luke 2:10](#))

Good News

The angel brings good news. This word is important for us as Christians. It is also translated "gospel" in other passages. The angel is bringing good news to the shepherds.

Well, what is the content of this announcement? And why is it good news? Notice in the next verse, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" ([Luke 2:11](#)). This is good news indeed. The promised son of David has come and is in the city of David ([Micah 5:2](#)). The King is here! This divine promise has been fermenting since [Genesis 3](#) when Adam and Eve first sinned ([Gen. 3:15](#)). There God promised a son from the line of Eve who would crush Satan and as a result bring relief from the blasted curse that was feared and felt on that fateful day. This broad promise of a Savior would narrow throughout the Bible. We learn that the descendent will be from Eve ([Gen. 3:15](#)), Abraham ([Gen. 12:1-3](#)), Judah ([Gen. 49:9-10](#)), David ([2 Sam. 7:12-17](#)), and will

be born in Bethlehem ([Micah 5:2](#)). The conquerer king has come! The oppression will indeed end.

At the same time there is a shadow cast over this verse. The shadow has its source in the later chapters of this book. This boy born in Bethlehem will grow into a man and be crucified outside of Jerusalem ([Lk. 23:44-46](#)). Jesus, the son of David, will bear the sins of his people ([Mt. 1:21](#)). Standing in their place he will suffer the consequences of all of their rebellion. Friends, this is good news. It is the best news!

Great Joy

So often, when we think of joy we think about happiness, a good mood, or maybe someone's personality type. Other times we think about a joy that's tied to our particular circumstances. When things are going well we are joyful, but when it is hard then, not so much.

It is important to remember the context of this announcement of joy. What follows in this narrative?

- Mary and Joseph: a scandalous birth, ridicule from neighbors . . .
- Jesus: born to die, poverty, conflict, pain, murderous crucifixion, rejected by peers, abandoned by his disciples . . .
- Mary: she watched her son die on the cross, her other children thought their brother was insane.

How is all of this connected to joy?

The Bible shows us that joy is tied ultimately to God's character—who God is and what he has said—instead of simply our circumstances. Our circumstances change, they go up and down; however, God's character is fixed—he does not change, and he is always trustworthy. This is one reason why this joy is so precious: it does not depend simply upon things going well for you but upon God being faithful. This is a reason to be joyful!

The second way this is connected to our joy is precisely because of what Christ has come to do. Jesus Christ came to be the Savior. He came to save or rescue us from the penalty of our sins. This is our greatest need. He lived a perfect life in our place, and he died the death that we deserved. His life and his death were for us. In every way that we failed—he succeeded!

Think about this: your greatest and most pressing issue in all the world for your entire life is this: how will you take care of your guilt before God?

Jesus is the Savior. He has taken care of this, your primary issue. Oh friends, this is a reason to be joyful, even in spite of varying circumstances.

For All the People

Finally the angel says that this good news of great joy was “for all the people.” The message of the gospel is extremely inclusive (for all the people) even as it is extremely exclusive (only through Jesus Christ). It is not limited to one particular ethnicity, social class, or even particular time in history. This message of the gospel is for all people.

It is even striking to whom the angel appeared. They are just some regular blue-collar guys. In fact, what are they doing? They are working in the field. In other words, these are regular “Joes” who are going about their lives putting in work. Notice the angel did not go to the academy, business elites, or even the high priest’s room. He came with this announcement to the shepherds; blue collar guys with callouses on their hands, a scraggly beard, and dirt under their nails. This makes the point that the gospel is for all people. Jesus was born for ordinary, regular people like you and me.

This is good news—and it is for us today. “Joy to the world, the Lord has come!”

The Bible makes clear that if we recognize our sin, our imperfection before God, and confess it to him, agreeing with him that it is bad and sinful, and asking him to forgive us—and we trust in Christ as our sin-bearing substitute, then God will forgive us.

The joy comes by knowing Christ. We come to know Christ by trusting in him. Perhaps you are reading this blog, and this concept of joy sounds foreign but is nevertheless attractive. You can have your greatest problem dealt with and then experience the joy that comes through knowing and trusting God.

And if this happens, it will get your attention—trust me.