

# Christmas 2013

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want you to open your Bibles up to Luke chapter 2. Last week we looked at the first few verses in chapter 2 of Luke, where Luke describes the birth of Christ, and so now we're going to move ahead and look at verses 8 through 20 this morning so that we can see some of the earliest witnesses to the coming of Christ into the world.

So Luke chapter 2, I'm going to begin reading in verse 8, and you guys can stand with me as we read together. Luke says that in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. 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.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[ 1 : 14 ] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger.

And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. Father, take your word now and help us by the power of your spirit, to not only understand the events that took place, but to see the significance that these events have for your people today.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You guys take a seat. Well, there have been a lot of people who have been, a lot of men who are in and out of church this time of year.

And not so much because of holiday travels, but because we are still technically in the middle of the primary hunting season of the year. And I didn't grow up hunting a lot.

[ 2 : 25 ] My dad didn't take us hunting all the time. Occasionally we went. We went more often when I was a teenager. I don't remember going as a kid, but as a teenager we went a few times.

And so I decided I'm going to try to take the boys as they get older to do more hunting and more of those sort of things than I did growing up, just so they can feel like they're manly men.

So this year I introduced Nate to hunting, and we've been out, I don't know, four or five or six times to hunt. We haven't actually shot anything, which is not really a big deal. Because the truth of the matter is most of the time that hunters go out hunting today, they don't shoot anything.

Half the time they don't even shoot at anything, much less kill anything. Because hunting is not so much these days for most hunters, it's not so much about bringing home meat so that you can live. Because if that's the issue, it's a lot cheaper to just go to the grocery store and buy a steak or buy some chicken or whatever. It's more expensive to have all the equipment that you need, to take the time off of work, to go hunting, and then have the animal that you kill to get it processed.

[ 3 : 28 ] That's more expensive than just going to the grocery store and buying something most of the time. So it's not so much about providing food for your family as it is about really just getting away from everything.

I mean, that's what most hunters enjoy the most. I mean, you don't get up at 4.30 in the morning when it's freezing cold and go out and sit in a tiny little deer stand hoping to see a deer that's worthy

to shoot at because you need the meat desperately.

You go out because there's nobody out there at 4.30 in the morning. And it's a convenient excuse to even turn off your phone because you don't want to scare off the animals. And so you're completely isolated from all the hustle and bustle and busyness of life.

That's what it's really mostly about for most men that like to go hunting. It's just getting away from the normal routines and from the busyness and from all the noise around us because that's not a common experience for us in today's world.

We don't experience that kind of quiet. We don't experience that kind of lack of distraction. But for these shepherds that we're looking at here, living 2,000 years ago, that would have been normal life for them.

[ 4 : 37 ] We find them here in Luke chapter 2 out in the fields watching their sheep by night, which was a typical practice of shepherds during those days. There were times when the sheep would be kept close to home and kept in sort of the barns and stables and those sorts of things either because of weather or because of other issues.

But then there were times when they would be taken out in the field to graze and most of the time when they were out away, they would keep them out all night. It's just easier that way. They would keep them out and so the shepherds would take turns watching over the sheep and sleeping throughout the night.

And they were accustomed to that sort of peaceful, calm, quiet life, sitting out in the middle of the field with nothing but the sound of the wind and the sheep bleating and nothing else really.

That's it. And yet on this particular night, these particular shepherds have the quiet and calm and silence of their night out in the field with the sheep interrupted in a sudden, sudden fashion.

Take a look at how Luke tells us. He doesn't give us a lot of details. He just tells the story fairly straightforward. He says in verse 8 that, In the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night.

[ 5 : 46 ] The same region being around Bethlehem. He just told us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. So somewhere near Bethlehem. We don't know exactly where these shepherds were. We don't know exactly how far away from Bethlehem they were.

There have been some pretty good guesses by scholars based upon where the locations are available for sheep to graze in the vicinity of Bethlehem. But we don't know exactly where they were. But they were somewhat close to Bethlehem.

Somewhat close. In the same region he tells us. And it says that while they're out there, all of a sudden an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with fear.

Literally what it says in Greek, it says that they feared a great fear. Which is a way of saying that they were really, really scared. This wasn't like the kind of scared when you think you see a shadow over in the corner and you're a little bit afraid of what it might be and you kind of get a little leery of things.

This is genuine terror, genuine real fright and fear for your life. Which shouldn't surprise us at all. Because this is the typical reaction of a human being in the presence of the glory of God.

[ 6 : 56 ] And that's exactly what we're told they were in the presence of. The glory of the Lord shone around them. That's why they were afraid. It wasn't simply because there was an angel present.

Because there are instances in which angels appear throughout the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, and people don't immediately respond with fear. It was because God revealed His glory, albeit a reflected glory from the angel, but He revealed His glory to them and they were frightened.

And that's a normal response for a person who sees God's glory. Isaiah, in Isaiah chapter 6. He says, I saw the Lord seated on the throne. And he saw God's glory, and Isaiah said, Woe is me, I'm undone.

Or consider the Apostle John in the book of Revelation. When Jesus appears to him, no longer veiling His glory as He did during His earthly ministry, but now revealed in all of His splendor and glory to John in a vision.

And John tells us at the beginning of Revelation that he says, I saw Him, and I fell down as if I were dead. Just on the ground. Because he's afraid.

[ 8 : 04 ] Because the Bible tells us that when sinners come into the presence of God, when they come into contact with His holy glory, the only possible response is death.

You cannot see God and live. Unless, of course, God in His mercy and grace wipes away your sin and enables you to stand in His presence.

Which is what he did with Isaiah. He said to Isaiah to take the coal, touch it to his lips, symbolic of washing away, wiping away Isaiah's sins. John's sins had already been dealt with, and so John is able, even though he's fearful and frightened and falls down as if he's dead, he stands and begins to hear the instructions of the Lord.

And these shepherds out in the field respond much like Israel did in the wilderness. These shepherds see not God's glory directly revealed, but His glory mediated through the angel, much like the people of Israel after Moses came down from the mountain.

And he had been in the presence of God for so long that now Moses' face shone with the glory of God, and the people were afraid of it. And they begged Moses, and they pleaded with Moses, put a veil over your face.

[ 9 : 19 ] And he had to literally cover his face with a veil because they could not stand the sight of God's reflected glory, not even a direct revelation of His glory, which I think is what's happening to these shepherds.

They cannot even bear the sight of God's glory mediated through the angelic messenger. They fear a great fear. It's a legitimate fear. It's a real fear.

It's a terrifying fear. And yet the angel immediately addresses that issue. The angel says, Do not be afraid. Stop. Calm down.

You're going to be okay. You're not going to be okay because you're not so bad. You can handle it.

You're not going to be okay because your sin is not so great that you can't be in God's presence.

You're going to be okay because I'm bringing you good news. Notice what the angel says. It says in verse 10, The angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

[ 10 : 19 ] I proclaim good news, is what he says. Literally he says, I gospel you. I'm coming to proclaim the gospel to you. I'm bringing you good news.

So don't be afraid. The answer to the problem of our inability to stand in God's presence and bear the weight of his glory is the good news of Jesus, which this angel has now come to reveal to these shepherds.

And it's amazing that he would come to these shepherds. I mean, it's a strange thing. It's a strange detail that is included here in the story of Christ's birth. Why should we know this?

Why is this significant? Why would this even occur? We understand in Matthew the magi coming and bringing gifts to Jesus and bowing down and worshiping Jesus.

We understand that these seem to be some sort of regal figure, some sort of wise people. We don't know exactly what the word magi means, but there's someone significant. So these people of significance come and offer their worship, offer up all that they have to this new king.

[ 11 : 29 ] That makes sense to us. Someone of note. Someone who's important to come and bow down before Jesus to demonstrate his superiority. But why the shepherds?

Why would an angel appear to these very common, ordinary people out in a field? Well, the message that the angel delivers and what he says about the gospel helps us to understand why things are unfolding in this way.

He says, I bring you good news of great joy. We'll come back to that phrase in a few minutes. But then he says that this good news is going to be for all the people. I want you to underline that phrase in your Bible.

If you write in your Bible, underline that phrase because I want you to focus in on it. I want you to think about what that means. This word for people is most commonly used in the Old Testament to refer to the people of Israel.

Now, in the plural form, it often refers to other nations, the peoples of the earth. But when we talk about the people in the Old Testament, we're normally talking about Israel, the people of God.

[ 12 : 34 ] So, the angel comes and says to these Jewish men out in the field watching their sheep, I'm bringing good news that is for all the people, singularly. It's for all the people of Israel.

In other words, it's not a message that is only for the influential. This is not a message that's intended only for the priests, or only for the Pharisees, or only for the Sadducees.

This is not a message that's intended for the religious elite. It's not a message intended only for the political elite. The angels aren't sent to King Herod. The angels aren't sent to the Roman rulers. The angels are sent to these common, ordinary, average Jewish men doing their job out in the field at night, and they're told that the gospel is going to be for people like you.

It's not just for the elites. It's not just for the super religious. This is for normal, common, ordinary folks like yourselves doing their job, active in the world.

[ 13 : 38 ] It's essential for us to understand that about the gospel. Sometimes I feel like churches today tend to try to win over those whom they perceive to be culturally influential.

And so we often hold up on pedestals at conferences and various things famous people who claim to be Christians. Whether or not they are, I don't know, but they claim to be and give them the benefit of the doubt.

So you'll see famous athletes asked to come in and preach at church. They know how to preach. They're qualified to open God's word and expound it to God's people.

But because they're famous, because they have a name, we want to cater to them and bring them in. Or, on the other hand, many churches try to reach the people in the community who they feel will have the most influence in the community or who will have the most, be able to provide the most financial backing and all those sorts of things.

And so you'll find churches targeting particular individuals or lifting up certain individuals, certain high profile people as this, this is the example of what we want of everyone. And yet we see the exact opposite happening here in the Gospel of Luke.

[ 14 : 55 ] The angels come to people who are nobody. Which is good news for nobodies like you and me. There's nobody famous in here. Alright?

I don't know if this is news to you, but I'm looking around the room and none of us in here are all that influential. None of us in here wield all of that much weight in our communities. We don't. We're just normal, ordinary people.

And the Gospel is intended for normal, ordinary people. Yes, it can also save the elites. It can. The Bible says that not many wise, not many of noble birth were chosen by God.

Paul says that in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. But he doesn't say none. But most of those who are chosen, most of those for whom the good news goes forth in a saving fashion, most of them are just average, common, ordinary people like these shepherds.

This is good news for all the people, the angel says. This is for you, shepherds. This is for you, normal people. It's crucial. And then the angel delivers the basic substance of the message here by simply identifying who Jesus is.

[ 16 : 11 ] Notice what the angel says, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. And here it is. For, here's the good news, because, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

So he begins by emphasizing once again the whole point of this to all the people. He says, for unto you. That is, for your benefit, something is, this is going to benefit you. The birth of a Savior is unto you, shepherds.

Good emphasis. And then he describes Jesus in three ways. First, he says that he's a Savior.

Secondly, he describes him as being Christ and thirdly, as Lord.

He is the Savior, he is the Christ, and he is the Lord. And when you take these three things together and you understand what each phrase means, you have the basic substance of the gospel message.

So, consider what it means for Jesus to be a Savior for us. Now, most people today don't believe that they need saving. Most people believe that what they need is improving.

[ 17 : 21 ] They need to be improved upon. They have some areas in their life that no doubt need to be fixed, and they need someone to come in and to help them to repair those areas, to fix those areas, to clean up those areas.

But that's far different from them needing to be saved. A person who needs to be saved is the person drowning and dying at the bottom of a river. They need to be pulled out, they need to be rescued, they need to be delivered.

A person who needs to be helped is someone who's swimming across the river and just needs a little encouragement along the way. You can do it. You're good enough. Go!

Go you! Do it! Swim harder! That's not what we need. We don't need that at all. We need salvation. And if you ask salvation from what, the Gospel of Matthew tells us really clearly in Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus where Joseph is told you will name the child Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

There are a lot of things that we need to be rescued from. Sometimes we just need to be rescued from our own idiocy because we do things that just make absolutely no sense. Sometimes we need to be rescued from the things that befall us in the world.

[ 18 : 41 ] Be it illness or injury or joblessness and those are all things that we need to cry out to God to rescue us from but our primary issue, our main problem is that we need to be rescued and delivered and saved from sin.

From all the effects of sin. I mean, sin is not something out there that we point to and we say this person and that person and those people, they're sinners.

Sin is something that dwells within us. Sin is something that affects me, it affects you and it brings with it death. Not just physical death but eternal, everlasting death.

The Apostle Paul says that the wages of sin is death. We will all die and the writer of Hebrews says after death comes the judgment and judgment doesn't fare well for those who are lawbreakers.

We are all lawbreakers. We have offended the infinite majesty of God Himself. We have we have rebelled against the perfectly good all wise, all glorious, infinitely beautiful God who made us.

[ 20 : 03 ] We have rebelled against Him. And the result is death and everlasting condemnation.

And the gospel is the good news that Jesus has come into the world to be a Savior for us, to rescue us from all the effects of sin.

So Jesus dies a death in our place the Bible tells us. The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians chapter 3 that He became a curse for us in our place.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 that Jesus became sin so that in Him we might become we might become the righteousness of God.

This good news of a Savior means that we now have hope that no matter what we've done, no matter how far we have strayed, no matter how far we have erred, no matter what dark paths we have walked down, we have hope because the death of Jesus is sufficient to pay the price for all the sins and the worst of the sins that you have committed.

It is more than sufficient to pay the price for your sins. There is hope for these cowering shepherds who cannot bear the sight of the glory of God because Jesus has come into the world to save them from the very thing that causes them to hide their eyes in shame and fear, their sin.

[ 21 : 37 ] And He has come into the world to save us from the very thing that would steal our hope, our joy. He has come to deliver us and rescue us from our sins.

And if you don't understand that about Jesus, if you don't understand that about this baby lying in a manger, then you don't understand Christmas. You don't understand the point of the celebration this time of year.

This is not about the celebration of a good man who was born 2,000 years ago. It's not worth it. It's not worth the time.

It's not worth the effort. It's just not worth it if He's just a good man who came and lived and said some good things for our benefit. This is about the birth of a Savior who's come to deliver us from our sins.

More than that, though, getting specific about what kind of Savior we're talking about here, the angel tells us not only is He Savior, but He is the Christ. He is the Messiah.

[ 22 : 41 ] It means the Anointed One. Which is another way of saying this is the one who is expected to come from the line of David that we talked about last week. Last week we talked about the significance of Jesus being born in the city of Bethlehem.

How God moved the world. He moved Caesar, the ruler of the Roman Empire, to institute a census, a counting, at the right time, and the right kind of census, which was not a normal Roman census, that would require Joseph to go along with his new wife to Bethlehem, the place of Joseph's ancestors, his home.

It's a strange kind of circumstances that came together to put Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem at this time because the prophet Micah had said that the coming king from the line of David would be born in this little, Noah-count town called Bethlehem, the hometown of David himself.

And now in the angel's message, the angel comes and says, Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, and he is the Christ. He is the Messiah. He is the king from the line of David. He will bring in, he will usher in all the things that were promised in the prophets concerning this one from the line of David. He will be called the Lord is our righteousness as the prophets tell us.

[ 24 : 06 ] He will usher in a new kind of kingdom. He will sit on his throne forever. This is the one who's coming. This is the one who has been born. This is the one that you will find in a feed trough in the little town of Bethlehem just down the road from you.

This is who he is. Understand that. So you can't disconnect the work of Christ for us on the cross from his descent from the line of David and his connection to the people of Israel.

You cannot disconnect those things because God gave the law through Moses to Israel. He didn't give it to the Egyptians.

He didn't give it to the Babylonians. He didn't give it to some Native Americans in South America.

He didn't give it to any tribes in Africa. He didn't give it to anyone in the far reaches of Asia.

He gave it to a little people called Israel, the descendants of Abraham. Those were the people that he chose out of the world to be a blessing to all the other families of the earth.

[ 25 : 14 ] And to them he gave the law through Moses. And it was God's law, God's word, that was broken. We are offenders of the law that God gave through Moses.

And the work that Jesus came to do on the cross of bearing the curse of the law of Moses in the place of those who have broken the law of Moses does not work. It does not make sense if you disconnect this Savior from the people of Israel.

He's vitally connected to the history of Israel in which God is working out his redemptive plan not only for the Israelites but for all the world. That plan does not work if Jesus is not born among Israel so that he might live his life in obedience to the law that God gave Israel in our place.

We focus so often at Christmas we focus on the birth of Christ. At Easter we focus on the death and the resurrection of Christ. that we don't focus often enough on the life of Christ.

Thirty some odd years of perfect obedience to the law of God given through Moses. Perfect obedience. Not one slip up.

[ 26 : 37 ] Not one moment where he was angry at his brother or sister and pushed him down. Not one moment. We can't get through an hour in my house without somebody doing that. not one moment.

Not not one time when he took something that didn't belong to him. Not not one time when he told a little white lie to his mom so that he would stay out of bigger trouble.

Never. Not once. A life of perfect full obedience measured by what? Measured by the law that God had given through Moses to the people of Israel.

This Jesus born as the Christ born as the Messiah born as the anointed king over Israel has come as a Jewish savior for not only the Jewish people but for all the world.

It is significant that he is the Messiah prophesied by the prophets of Israel. So that you you don't have to daily turn to the ten commandments found in the law of Moses and begin to check them off every day.

[ 27 : 45 ] I've done this one okay obeyed this one didn't break this law didn't break that law I've done well this today I've done better this week I've done well this month you don't have to do all of that. Christ has done it for you and in your place and the life you now live you live in joyful gratitude for the life that he lived in your place.

He's a Jewish savior come to save all those outside the people of Israel. And then lastly we're told that he is in fact the Lord.

That's a pregnant term it's got a lot of meaning packed into it but if I were to ask what is Luke highlighting about the Lordship of Christ here? There are other places where you'll find the word Lord in the New Testament and it's pretty clear that the writer there wants to emphasize Christ's divinity.

many times because this Greek word translated Lord is the same word in the Greek Old Testament that was used to translate the word Jehovah or Yahweh.

So many times when you're reading through the New Testament it becomes pretty clear that the New Testament writers in using the word Lord to describe Jesus are highlighting the fact that Jesus is Yahweh.

[ 29 : 00 ] He is Jehovah. That's who he is. And sometimes that's the emphasis. It's always there in the background but sometimes it's in the foreground and it's the emphasis. That's not the case here I don't think. That's not what Luke is emphasizing here.

I think we can understand the main emphasis of Luke in calling Jesus Lord if we remember what happened at the very beginning of this chapter. Verse 1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

Caesar who demanded that all the people under his rule call out to him Caesar is Lord.

In fact the early Christians were when they were persecuted it wasn't normally because of their behavior although that was the case at times because they wouldn't participate in certain cultural practices.

Most of the time that the earliest persecution occurred for Christians in the Roman Empire was because they would not say Caesar is Lord. They would not say it. They would only say Christ is Lord or Jesus is Lord.

[ 30 : 10 ] That was their mantra. They would not own up to Caesar having any sort of claim upon lordship. Jesus and Jesus alone, the one crucified by Roman soldiers on a hill outside the city of Jerusalem, that one, he alone is worthy of the title Lord.

And I think Luke in beginning this chapter by highlighting God's sovereignty over Caesar and moving Caesar to take a census, now here reveals to us through the words of the angel that Jesus is the sovereign king.

Despite the appearances of things, despite the fact that he's born in a little town and laid in a manger, despite the fact that he himself lying in the manger is not surrounded by the heavenly host, despite the fact that there are no parades, despite all of that, he is lord, he is king.

This Caesar is a mere shadow of the true king. His power is a microcosm of the power of this king lying in a manger in Bethlehem.

And Luke would have us know and understand that that no matter what things may look like in the world around us, Jesus is the king. He is lord.

[ 31 : 40 ] The angel would have these shepherds know. It's the king who's been born. It's the sovereign one who has been born here in Bethlehem. So no matter the fact that, never mind that the Roman soldiers march through your streets, in a moment a heavenly host, literally a heavenly army will appear to sing the praises of the king born in Bethlehem.

Jesus, in fact, himself said to Pilate as he stood on trial, I could call down a multitude of angels if I so wished.

He could call down an army at any time, and he doesn't. The Roman soldiers who march through the streets of the cities of Palestine, the Roman governors who sit in their palaces and issue decrees, and Caesar himself who sits in Rome and commands a vast army, they are nothing in comparison with the power of this king.

We ought to remember that today because we grow frustrated constantly and continually with arguing, fussing, fighting congressional leaders or presidents that we feel make bad decisions, or foreign kings who oppress their people, foreign dictators who oppress their people and do terrible things to their nation, and we grow so frustrated and we begin to think that the world is completely out of sorts, and we need to be reminded in the midst of that, that though things may look on the surface level as if all of these tin pot dictators and councils of men are ruling the world, they are not. Jesus is Lord, and there will come a time when every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[ 33 : 38 ] This is who he is. The question becomes, how does that benefit me directly? It benefits us in the fact of knowing it and hoping in it, that's true, but directly.

If I move down, I want to move to the rest of the angels' message, and this comes from the host of angels. Verse 14, we'll begin in verse 13. Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

Now that may sound strange to you if you are accustomed to the Christmas songs that we sing, or you're accustomed to the King James version off of which those Christmas songs are based, in which this saying of the angels, this song of the angels is divided into three parts, which would be something like this, glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men.

Does that sound more familiar to you? That sounds more familiar, okay? That's not actually what the text says. I won't go into all the technical reasons for why that's not what it says. But what it actually says here is not good will toward men, but it says peace to men of good will, which means, is a phrase that means peace to those who receive the good pleasure and favor of God himself. That's what it means. That's what the phrase means. So glory to God on the one hand, the angels sing, because of the birth of his Messiah and Savior, but this gospel, this good news that the angel has come to proclaim brings peace, but to whom does it bring it?

[ 35 : 21 ] Not to everyone indiscriminately. Not good will to all men everywhere. No, it's particular. It's focused. Peace comes through the Savior to those upon whom God's favor rests.

which is a way of saying those who receive his mercy and grace. Those who are the recipients of God's mercy receive peace.

How do you know? How do you know if God is showering his saving mercy and grace upon you? Because it doesn't go out to all. How do you know if you are one of those who receive it?

How do you know if you are one of those upon whom it falls? The saving grace of God, the saving mercy of God, always has an effect within the human heart.

And that effect is faith in Jesus. It produces it. It causes it. So that in 1 John chapter 5, we read that we know that we have been born again, and we have been caused to be born again because we have faith.

[ 36 : 34 ] faith. That we have been born again unto faith. That faith is the result of God's saving work within the hearts of those upon whom he has showered his favor.

So how do you know if this peace is yours? How do you know if this peace can belong to you or does belong to you? It's simple. Do you trust in this Savior? Do you believe in him?

Do you really wholeheartedly believe the angel's message? That he is a Savior who can deliver you from your sins and the penalty of your sins.

He is the long promised Messiah, and he is Lord and King of all things. Do you believe that?

Because if you find yourself wholeheartedly believing that, then peace belongs to you.

I said earlier we would come back to this issue of joy. Because the angel's message was, I bring you good news of great joy. Never forget that.

[ 37 : 36 ] Never miss that part. Because joy is not simply an emotion that we sing about in December. Joy is a wellspring of happiness in the hearts of those who trusted in Christ.

And it begins to stream forth even when the darkness of sadness alights upon our lives. That's what real joy does.

And the joy that the angel is talking about here is the kind of joy that flows out of the hearts of those who have trusted in Christ and now know that they have received his peace and they have the hope of eternal life laid up for them so that no matter what might befall you, what grievances, what troubles, what sicknesses, what losses, what deaths might befall you now here in this life.

The gospel brings you joy because of peace laid up for you because of the peacemaking work of this Savior born in this town sung about by these angels.

And so the real issue is do we trust in him and have we received that gift of peace and joy? Have we? Do you really believe in this kind of Savior?

[ 38 : 59 ] Because anything less than that will not do. Any list of things that you might lay out that you have done will not count before God.

One thing counts before him. Faith in his son. Let's pray. Father, help us to hear the gospel proclaimed by these angels and to rejoice in it and to hope in it and to not to not be fooled into thinking that joy is primarily rooted in family and friends, but to know that joy is rooted in faith in Jesus.

And even the joy and the happiness we experience from being around our family and our friends is a joy that flows from the goodness and the grace that you've given us in Jesus.

I pray that none of us would have what the Bible calls an evil unbelieving heart, but that we would leave this good message and we'd be filled with peace and joy.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.