

AT THE MANGER

Joy at the Manger

Luke 2:8-14

Main Idea: Great joy comes through the good news of the gift of God's Son!

God desires that sinners hear the good news of the gift of his Son (8-9).

- *The grace of the Holy God of creation comes to sinners who aren't expecting him (8-9).*
- *The glory of the Holy God of creation strikes fear in sinners who are confronted by him (9).*

Much has been written and proposed about why God came to those shepherds that night, but one thing is sure from the text: They weren't expecting an angel of the Lord to appear to them that night! The shepherds were watching their sheep. They weren't looking for the Messiah. They weren't expecting an angel from heaven, but God chose them for his special announcement that night! What a beautiful moment in history that captured the grace of the Holy God of creation who comes to sinners who aren't expecting him. In fact, this moment captured the very truth of God's grace as it revealed how the glory of the Holy God of creation strikes fear in sinners who are confronted by him. When the angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord surrounded them, the shepherds were filled with great fear! Sinners who deserved God's judgment were in the presence of the Righteous Judge of creation, yet they were not destroyed. Why? Because God desires that sinners hear the good news of the gift of his Son. The shepherds remind us of this joyous gift of God's grace through his Son!

1. Discuss how we see God's grace in coming to those shepherds that night outside of Bethlehem.
 - a. How did God come to you with the good news of Jesus Christ?
 - b. Today, do we always need to wait until someone is looking for Jesus before we tell them the good news of Jesus Christ?
2. Discuss how the shepherds experienced fear when they were confronted with the glory of the Lord.
 - a. Did you experience fear when the Lord revealed himself to you and confronted you with his glory in contrast to your sinfulness?
 - b. Why is the fear of the Lord such a consistent and important aspect of how the Lord confronts sinners with the good news of the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ?

God sends the good news of Jesus to sinners who need the Savior (10-12).

- *God calls sinners to not be afraid when he comes to them with the good news of Jesus (10).*
- *The good news of Jesus is news of great joy for people from every nation (10).*
- *Jesus is God the Son, the Messiah, who saves his people from their sin (11).*

In response to the fear of the shepherds, the message of the angel of the Lord was direct and comforting: "Fear not!" God calls sinners to not be afraid when he comes to them with the good news of Jesus. His purpose wasn't judgment; it was mercy! His message wasn't condemnation; it was salvation! The good news of Jesus is news of great joy for people from every nation. Literally, the language of the New Testament says for "all the people." The word for people identifies not only people in general but also particular groups of people, who are identified by a shared language and culture. This news of Jesus was news of great joy for people from every nation! Why? Because Jesus is God the Son, the Messiah, who saves his people from their sin. Jesus is "Lord." This word

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is the same word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to identify the covenant God of Creation. Jesus is God the Son in the flesh! Jesus is the Messiah. He is the “Christ,” who is the anointed one and the long-promised Messiah, who is the heir to the throne of King David. Jesus is the “Savior,” who came to save his people from their sin. In all of these wonderful truths, we see the joyous truth that God sends the good news of Jesus to sinners who need a Savior!

1. Discuss how God’s grace is seen in the way the angel commands them not to fear. Why did the angel command them not to be afraid? What does this reveal about God’s intent in confronting the shepherds that night? Did you experience this in the way the Lord came to you with the good news of Jesus?
2. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do word studies on verse 10. What are the words for “great joy” and “every nation?” Discuss what God said and what it means. How does it apply to the work of the gospel today in your church?
3. Verse 11 contains some significant titles for Jesus. Take time to study and to discuss these titles. What is the significance of each one? Do you understand them? Is Jesus all of these things to you?

At the birth of the Savior, the joy of heaven burst onto earth (13-14).

At the birth of Jesus, the joy of heaven couldn’t be contained! Instantly, there was a heavenly host of angels who joined the angel messenger to praise the Father for the gift of his Son!

“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Joy at the manger is the very joy of heaven that comes to earth through the gift of God’s Son. Joy is found in the grace of God through the gift of the Savior, his Son. Joy is deep when the mercy of God is deeply understood: That rather than the judgment we deserve, God has given us the gift of peace and forgiveness through the sacrifice of his Son. Joy is shared through sharing the good news of Jesus, praising the Lord for the gift of his Son. The praise of heaven reminds us of the joyous gift of the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord!

1. Imagine the sound of that heavenly proclamation and praise that night! Have you ever felt so much joy that you had to let it out in praise to the Lord through singing, praying, shouting, speaking, etc.?
2. How does the gift of Jesus bring us joy? What is the right way to express our joy?
3. This Christmas, do you know someone who needs the good news of great joy that’s only found in Jesus Christ? Pray for them, and take time to encourage and to equip one another to tell them this Christmas about the gift of God’s Son, Jesus Christ!