

Sermon Notes for Luke 2:1-20, Christmas Day

1. Luke chapter 2 and Matthew 1-2 tell us all that we know of the life of Jesus until the time of His public ministry when He was thirty years old. The Gospels are not biographies but they do tell us enough to know who Jesus is and what He has done for us.
2. Without his own knowledge and will Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, arranged the conditions for Jesus' birth. The providence of God rules all the affairs of men so that His name is hallowed, His kingdom comes among men and His will is done now and forever.
3. That Jesus would be born of a virgin was foretold at Isaiah 7:14. That He would be born in Bethlehem was foretold at Micah 5:2. And that He would be called "Jesus" was foretold by the angel at Matthew 1:21. Jesus Christ is the central fulfillment of the Old Testament.
4. Although Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married, from Matthew 1:25 we learn that they did not live together as man and wife until Jesus had been born.
5. Jesus was the firstborn child of Mary and Joseph. That neither asserts nor denies that Jesus had sisters and brothers from Mary and Joseph. But the virgin birth of Jesus applies only to His conception and birth. The Bible does not say that she remained to be a virgin after Jesus' birth. Very likely she and Joseph had more children after Jesus' birth. His brothers and sisters are mentioned repeatedly in the Gospels. Cf. Matthew 13:55-56. Jesus was not conceived by human father but by the Holy Ghost, Luke 1:35, so that He would not be conceived and born in sin. The Bible does not say that Jesus' birth was abnormal. Very likely He was born in the usual way.
6. When the angels appeared to the shepherds the shepherds became afraid. The angel said; "Fear not." About eighty times in the Old Testament and the New Testament God and His messengers say to fearful people: "Fear not." And in all cases a reason for not fearing is given immediately. Here the angel says: "Because I bring you good news." Once on the Sea of Galilee Jesus said to His disciples: "Fear not, it is I." God never merely says: "Do not be afraid." He always tells us why we should not be afraid.
7. In this chapter we are told that the angels praised God for what He had done, verse 13, and the shepherds praised God for all the things which they had heard and seen. The hosts of heaven and earth rejoice and praise God for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. And in heaven the angels and redeemed sinners will praise God forever. For example, see Revelations 5:11-12.
8. Many Christmas hymns in the church are based on the account in Luke 1-2. Furthermore, Luke gives us the four great Canticles: Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55, which is commonly sung in the Vesper Service; the Benedictus Luke 1:68-79, which is commonly sung in the Matins Service; the Gloria in Excelsis Deo (Glory Be To God on High), which is commonly sung every Sunday; and the Nunc Dimittis (Lord, now let your servant depart), Luke 2:29-32, which is commonly sung in the Vesper Service. The shortest of these is the Gloria, Luke 2:14, but it is rightly sung the most often. It is our text for today.
9. The angels rejoiced when God created the world, Job 38:7, when Christ was born, Luke 2:13-14, and still do when one sinner repents of his sin, Luke 15:7-10. The angels rejoice over creation, redemption and sanctification. We should remember that when we confess either the Apostles or the Nicene Creeds.
10. Jesus became poor so that we might be rich. II Corinthians 8:9. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. Philippians 2:6-7. He came to serve us. Mark 10:45. He still serves us. Matthew 28:20. He will still serve us in heaven. Luke 12:37. What a wonderful Savior He is! What a wonderful example He is! If I wish to be first in the kingdom, I must become like Jesus, last, servant of all. Matthew 20:26-28. The work of the church is to preach the Gospel and to serve mankind, as did Jesus.

Sermon Outline for Luke 2:1-20, Christmas Day

Theme: THE ANGEL'S SONG LEADS US FROM FEAR TO JOY

Introduction: Great musicians like Bach, Handel and Mozart have written arias and oratorios on the basis of Luke 2:14. Many Christmas hymns are based on this text. Our text is a great turning point in history. The world sat in darkness, sin and fear. But God appeared in the person of a baby. That baby was true God, revealing the glory, peace and good will of God. After each musical composition J. S. Bach would write S. D. G. "Soli Deo Gloria" "To God Alone be the Glory." And each Sunday morning we sing: "Glory to God on High." This song introduces Jesus Christ who revealed God's glory, peace and good will. It is the great song of angels and Christians.

I GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

The word "glory" occurs over 400 times in the Old Testament. It denotes God's awesome splendor and holiness. He is the God or King of Glory. Psalm 24:7ff; 29:3. Sinful man could not behold this glorious God. Moses feared when God appeared in glory. But in the New Testament "glory" is used in association with God's visible revelation of Himself to man. When the glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds they were afraid. Luke 2:9. But he said: "Fear not for I bring you good news." The revelation of glory made them unafraid. By faith we look forward to the glorious appearance of the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself in our stead. Titus 2:13. When God became man, man believed in his glory although he could not yet see it. John 1:14 says "We beheld His glory." II Peter 1:16 says "We were eye-witnesses of His glory." They saw Him transfigured, Luke 9:31-32, revealing the glory of God. We see God's glory in Jesus' miracles. John 2:11; 11:40. Jesus and the Father glorified each other when Jesus died and rose for us. John 13:31-32. "Glory to God in the Highest" means that Jesus is my Savior. Now His is the glory. Galatians 1:5; Hebrews 13:21. When we die we shall be glorified. Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:21; I Corinthians 15:43.

II ON EARTH THERE IS PEACE

When man fell into sin there was no peace between man and God and no peace among men. Sinful man is dead in his sins but he is worse than dead because he is at war with God and with man. Man causes wars and rumors of wars. But Jesus says: "Do not be shaken, for these things must be, but the end is not yet." Matthew 24:6. Awful things will happen. But our text says: "Fear not. There is peace on earth." This is not a state or a condition. Of course, God wills peace for the whole creation. I Corinthians 14:33. But when you have the peace of God you may have strife with your relatives who are not Christians. Read Matthew 10:34-36. But even then you can have peace with God. He says: "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid." John 14:27. "I have said these things to you so that in Me you have peace. In this world you have tribulation. But be cheerful, I have overcome the world." John 16:33. Though we were dead in sins, He made us alive, forgiving us all our sins. He wiped out the handwriting against us. He nailed our sins to the cross. Colossians 2:13-15. Christ Jesus is our peace. Ephesians 2:14. He is the king of peace. Hebrews 7:2. His gospel is the gospel of peace. Ephesians 6:15. The peace of God, Christ's gift, protects us. Philippians 4:7. Justified by faith, we now have peace with God through Christ. Romans 5:1.

III THERE IS GOD'S GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN

This is the proper translation, not "to men of good will." Because of God's good will, the Son is hidden to the wise but revealed to the babes. Luke 10:21. The arrogant world does not know the Son. The repentant sinner does know the Son. The word "good will" occurs at Ephesians 1:5-9. Read all of Ephesians 1:3-14 with special emphasis on verses 5 and 9. Why did you become a Christian? Because of a decision? No, no. But only because of the good pleasure of God's saving will in Christ Jesus. Because of His good saving pleasure God chose you in Christ Jesus to save you eternally.

Conclusion: Praise God for the baby Jesus. He brings peace and God's pleasure.