

Week 3  
**The Song of Angels**  
Luke 2:8-21

Today we are in Luke 2, turn with me to Luke 2 starting in verse 8. Today we will be looking at the verses Linus made famous when he exhorted Charlie Brown with the real meaning of Christmas. You can't help but hear Linus's voice as you read it.

This is the Christmas story - the crescendo moment of Advent—the birth of Jesus. This is not some fanciful Christmas legend, but a moment in real time with recorded history. There was a decree from Caesar Augustus that everyone should be registered in a census. This happened to real people, Mary and Joseph made their pilgrimage to Bethlehem—their assigned census site, and while there the time came for her to give birth. In a real place, when they arrived to Bethlehem there was no room in the inn, so she gave birth in a first century stable or barn, and laid her little boy in a feeding trough for animals, an unlikely welcome for a King.

Just the other night we were eating dinner and using these little advent conversation starter cards. Someone read a card and we would take turns answering them. Zoe my oldest read the card, “Why are you thankful Jesus was born?” Toby my 6 year old quickly responded “so he could make me and I could play with toys.” Guys we are trying I promise. Reflecting on it afterwards the song lyrics kept playing over in my head

He has come for us  
This Jesus  
He's the hope for all  
Mankind  
He has come for us  
The Messiah  
Born to give us life

This little boy is the fulfillment of countless promises and a myriad of desperate hopes. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is taking on flesh to save people like me and you. He has come for us.

**Luke 2:8-21**

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. Shepherds were a very unlikely group to get the announcement they're about to get. They lived by themselves, outside of town, with animals all the time, sleeping in the open. That's not the job you shoot for, that's the job you end up with. They couldn't participate in regular temple sacrifices or feasts because they couldn't leave the flock. So they were outsiders. That's who God's messenger comes to. Like we said last week, good news for the humble and the lowly.

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

No duh, they were filled with fear. Of course, they had to be completely caught off guard. This was out of nowhere, totally unexpected. The shepherds aren't sitting around talking like - "Hey, you think the angel is gonna show up tonight? You think tonight is the night? They had no clue that tonight was going to be different than the 100s of other nights they spent under the stars. It's dark out. Only the moon and stars and maybe a campfire to help light up the field. Just doing their shepherdly tasks - watching the sheep.

And the fear wasn't just out of surprise but the fear was also related to the presence of an angel. Angels are not little cupid like babies playing harps. They are God's spiritual warriors. Most of the time we see them fighting wars.

A completely abnormal experience for these weathered men who had spent countless nights under the stars. The night sky erupts with the presence of God's Warrior back lit by the glory of the Lord. Not exactly sure what the glory of the Lord is but I bet it's bright.

So of course the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

The Angel tells the shepherds not to be afraid. Why? Because this angel is not here to bring war, but he is here to bring "good news". It's the same word translated throughout the NT as "Gospel".

This word "good news" or "gospel" comes from the word used to declare victory. The king's messenger returns from the battlefield declaring victory. It was a term of great relief, because if a country won a war, the king's messenger would return from the battlefield declaring victory—saying, "We won! We won!" This isn't like a victory celebration in football, sure you might get bragging rights for the next year but it's not close to the same. This is a celebration because the people wouldn't get slaughtered by the enemy or sold into slavery. This is life changing victory.

The angel is a herald of good news. He is an official messenger sent by God to proclaim victory and great joy for all people. And again look who God sent his message of victory to, God the King of the universe declares victory to the lowly shepherds.

Good news and great joy for all the people, not just for the elites, or the Jews who have been waiting centuries for the promised Messiah, but also for the rest of the world. For all who would believe in Christ - this is good news of great joy for them, for us.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

The good news is that "a Savior, Christ the Lord" has come.

**Jesus is the Savior.** Christ came to save. He came bringing salvation for all who would believe. There is a God. Sin has separated us from Him. Everything within us and around us is broken, and we need forgiveness and salvation. We need to be saved from ourselves, from our sin, and from the holy and righteous wrath of God. Jesus came to be Savior.

**Jesus is the Christ.** It means “anointed one.” It’s the NT word for the OT title of Messiah. Jesus is the promised one. He’s the one prophets for thousands of years have said was coming into the world. He’s the one who fulfills the covenant promise. He is the one they’ve been waiting on. He is the fulfillment of their hopes, and yet better than they imagined.

**Jesus is the Lord.** He’s God become man. In a wonderful mystery of God, Jesus is fully God and fully man. And being fully God, He is Lord. He rules and reigns. That little baby in the manger is still the Lord of history. In Him, all things still hold together (Col 1:17). He’s still sovereign and ruling and reigning. He’s King.

It’s a proclamation of victory. Jesus Christ is born!

- The Savior — who takes away our sins and guilt.
- The Christ — who fulfills all that was promised.
- The Lord — who defeats all His enemies and reigns forever as king.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, As if their night couldn’t get any crazier. Not one angel but a multitude. Like hundreds, if not 1000s of angels. It’s an explosion of angels in the sky.

I know many of us have heard this story many times and we have sung songs about this story every year, but I want to point out to you that this is a very big deal. If one angel shows up with a message, that’s already a huge deal. But if a multitude of warrior angels, shining with God’s glory, rip the sky and start singing together that’s altogether different. In fact, this is the only time in the Bible that this happens outside of heaven. Every other time we see a group of angels like this ... they’re in the throne room with God.

Except for this one time right here. The throne room is breaking through. Because of Jesus. He has come. God incarnate. Divinity being born as a human baby... is so magnificent that a whole multitude of angels come to witness and proclaim it.

One angel to make the announcement, a whole host to celebrate and worship.

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

Glory to God, he is victorious and with his victory he brings peace. Peace, shalom to all that is broken. The Hebrew word for **peace is shalom** and it’s way more than the absence of conflict. Not just the absence of bad. It’s the presence of everything good that is supposed to exist in all our relationships. With God, ourselves and others.

Cornelius Plantinga Jr. - "Shalom is universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight. Shalom is the way things are supposed to be."

It's the idea of wholeness or completeness. So it can refer to a fabric that is perfectly woven together with no threads missing. Or a building stone with no cracks or missing pieces. And it can also refer to a stone wall that has no gaps or missing stones. Shalom is the word Job uses when he counts his sheep and none are missing.

Shalom is "Wholeness, flourishing, rest." Everything as it should be. Everything as it was created to be. This is what we see all the way back in Genesis 1-2. God creates the world, creates the first man and first woman - Adam and Eve. And we see how things were supposed to be.

But then Genesis 3.

Our first parents believed the oldest lie in the book. That God cannot be trusted. God does not know. God does not want what is good for me. That God does not love them. That they would be better off, happier, more joyful, if they did not submit to God.

Adam and Eve rebel against God. Sin enters the world. **And peace, wholeness, flourishing is broken.** All relationships are not bent, broken, cracked and strained. We feel it in us and around us.

So the ultimate problem with the world is that we have fallen out of shalom. **Shalom is replaced with Turmoil, Conflict, War, Chaos.**

**Turmoil with God** - Adam & Eve reject God's authority, choosing this autonomy, and instantly their shalom with God is broken. You see that after this they run and hide from him. They are now separated from God

**Turmoil with Ourselves** - Their shalom with themselves is broken. They actually realize they are naked after this act, and go sew figleaves to cover themselves up. This was the birthplace of insecurity and shame and pretending to something you aren't.

**Turmoil with Others** - Their shalom with each other and other humans is broken. There was no hatred, jealousy or violence whatsoever before this, and later you'll read that one of their sons killed their other son.

Keys - It's actually easy to prove that something is wrong with us and how we relate to each other.

**Turmoil with Creation** - Their shalom with creation was broken. From this point forward, the work of the man is cursed with difficulty and frustration. Creation itself fights back as we try to subdue it, because everything is cracked and off kilter. If you dislike your job, this is why. For the woman, childbearing and her relationship with her husband was cursed with difficulty. So if your marriage is hard, this is why. If your family drives you crazy, this is why. If you have relationships that are broken, this is why. This is why some people are marginalized and oppressed. This is why some people take advantage of others.

This is why systems can become corrupt. This is why racism exists. This is why poverty exists. This is why sickness and death and disease are a part of life now.

**All of this was a world-wide, cosmic process of shalom-breaking.** Like the whole Earth was hit with a giant mallet and cracked. There once was rhythm and peace, now the cosmos is in chaos. No violence becomes unbelievable violence in a hurry. Relationships are broken. People start blaming each other, hurting each other, using each other, killing each other. Pain is amplified. Work takes work.

The angels sing, the multitude is gathered, the throneroom of Heaven has come to earth because Victory is at hand. The angels know what is happening. They have been waiting and now they are proclaiming the coming of Jesus. The one who will restore all things, the one who is to bring Peace. The Prince of Peace. Peace to those who have God's favor. Those who receive God's grace. Jesus the messiah has come to bring peace, wholeness, and restoration to all the earth.

**Jesus restores peace with God.** Our estrangement, our fear, our distrust, our arrogance. All of that separates us from him is nailed to the cross with him, our record of transgressions. Above all things we need shalom with God restored, and He offers it to us through the precious blood of His Son. We are now accepted by God on Christ's behalf. Our sin debt is paid and we are now counted as righteous.

Which begins to flow into our relationship with self.

**Jesus restores peace within himself.** He's curing the shame, the guilt, the insecurity our sin brought. I imagine many of us in the room, at some point in our lives, have thought or said, "Sure...God can forgive me, but I can't forgive myself."

I want to give you good news – when you die, you will not stand in front of a mirror. You will stand before God. Your forgiveness is not decisive, God's is. You are not above God and your sense of justice is not above God's. When God in Christ declares that you are forgiven, then you...are...forgiven.

Which is what begins to transform our relationships with others.

**Jesus restores peace to our relationships with each other,** so that we can love and serve and bless one another because we are now restored as individuals, so we don't have to use and manipulate one another.

**One day he will fully restore peace to our relationship to creation,** Revelation 21 says that Jesus will return to our back right every single thing that sin ruined, even the earth itself. No more sickness, disease, pain or tears.

He's reconciling all things to himself, through the cross.

## **Conclusion**

These are promises started, but not yet promises fulfilled. Jesus has come. His kingdom is here. But it's not yet finished. We live in the "already, but not yet."

- While those of us who trust in Christ have peace with God, we still wrestle with shame and guilt and doubt and disobedience.
- While we have peace with our souls, we still experience anxiety, worry, depression, and the internal pressure to hide or perform.
- While we have peace with others, we still struggle with gossip, division, hatred, and jealousy.
- While we have peace with creation, we still have very real suffering and hurt and pain and death.

Advent is not just a season for remembering, but also a season for anticipating.

That's the dual meaning and celebration of Advent. We celebrate that Christ came for us, but as we remember the longing of those 1st century Jews, we feel a longing in our own souls as we anticipate and await that He is coming for us again. Not as a baby in a manger but as a ruling and conquering King.

We remember that on that one night 2000 some years ago in a field outside of Bethlehem a multitude of angels announced to shepherds that Christ's Kingdom of Peace is bursting forth, but one day that Kingdom will be brought to fruition. And all things will be as they ought to be:

- Peace with creation, as there will be no more sickness, death, crying, or pain.
- Peace with others as people from every tribe, tongue, and nation worship God together.
- Peace with our souls, as we take on new bodies free from sin, shame, and guilt.
- And most importantly, peace with God - as He will dwell among us and those who trust in Christ will be His people forever.

Flourishing, wholeness, peace. The Great Kingdom of Peace has begun, but we wait for its ultimate consummation.

And until that day we wait with longing.