

I Corinthians 13, Christmas Version

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family,
I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend myriad holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust.

But giving the gift of love will endure.

Merry Christmas
Author Unknown

Three Christmas Sermons

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr,

December 20, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent – Faith and Love

Text: Luke 2:1-20

Purpose: All of us are at a different place in our walk with God. Some people are like the angels, ministering to others and telling others about Jesus. Some are like the shepherds, understanding the great message of salvation, responding to it, and praising God in spite of their life's circumstances. But there are some individuals that are like the innkeeper, making no room for the Savior of the world. Which are you?

A man went to his dentist because he felt something wrong in his mouth. The dentist examined him and said, "That new upper plate I put in for you six months ago is eroding. What have you been eating?"¹

The man replied, "All I can think of is that about four months ago, my wife made some asparagus and put some stuff on it that was delicious...hollandaise sauce! I love it so much now that I put it on everything -- meat, toast, fish, vegetables, everything!"



¹ Mikey's Funnies, Dec. 12, 2007

The dentist said, "Well, that's probably it. Hollandaise sauce is made with lots of lemon juice, which is highly corrosive. It's eaten away your upper plate. I'll have to make you a new one, and this time, I'll use chrome"

"Why chrome?" asked the patient.

"It's simple," said the dentist. "Everyone knows there's no plate like chrome for the hollandaise."

Have you noticed how our culture is struggling with this Political Correctness? This political correctness is probably going to get so bad that it will almost become offensive to say Merry Christmas. I even understand some retailers are avoiding saying it. They have substituted "Happy Holidays" or "Season's Greetings" for the traditional "Merry Christmas!"

But someone reminded me recently that there are about 14 different religious holidays over the next few months. Maybe we as Christians should show some grace to others and not become so uptight when someone says, "Happy Holidays."

With all of our modern improvements today, we cannot improve on the real meaning given to us that first Christmas. The holiday season is, for many people, can be one of the most depressing times of the year. It is easy to get so caught up in the preparations and the festivities and even the pain we may feel in our hearts during the holidays that we forget the real meaning of the season.



It isn't about gifts and trees and decorations. It isn't even about families and parties and fun. It certainly isn't about Santa Claus and elves and reindeer. It is all about Jesus and all about Him alone!

So for just a few minutes today let's leave our world behind and visit once again the little town of Bethlehem. Let's let Jesus transform our Christmas.

The night God became flesh and walked among men ranks as one of the greatest days in human history. It was a night of tremendous miracles and great blessings. It was the night when God moved into the world to live and eventually to die. Though this story is 2,000 years old, it is still as fresh to me as the first time I heard it.

Let's visit Bethlehem again this morning and notice that as Mary delivered Jesus into this world, there were some Christmas Sermons being delivered also.

Clay Whittington – "Mary Did You Know" by Mark Lowry

I. A Sermon of Peace – Delivered by the Heavenly Choir (v. 10-14)

The first message that we received the night Jesus was born was a sermon of peace. It was brought by a host of angels from heaven. It was first a ...



A. A Soothing Message – Do Not Fear (v. 10a)

Over and over in the message of Christmas is one that says, “*Fear Not!*” When Elizabeth and Zacharias first got the news that they were going to give birth to a child by the name of John, the angel first said, “*Do not be afraid.*” (Luke 1:13) Later when the angel appeared to Mary to give her the news of her soon to be born Son, Jesus, he said to her, “*Do not be afraid.*” (Luke 1:30). In the story we read of Joseph’s encounter with the angel, he said, “*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*” (Matt. 1:20)

We need to realize that God is totally in control of our lives and we do not need to fear either. Sometimes we allow our fear of death, hell, Satan, or even life to generate fear within us. But we need to realize that God is not the source bringing fear into our lives. He always says, “*Fear Not.*”

B. A Salvation Message (v. 10-11)

Not only was the message soothing, it was also a salvation message.

The angels said, “*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*” That was a message of Great News. We so often treat the message of Christ with indifference because we have heard it over and over. But it is Great News that the Creator of the world has come to redeem His creation. He has come to save us. It is a message to “all people.” It is a universal message of hope and joy for all to experience. It is not just for selected cultured individuals. It is not just a message for the rich and influential. It is not just a message for America.

It is a message for ALL people. Most importantly, it is a message for YOU. It is a word that YOU can obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. The News is Universal as well as Personal.

We see in this passage three different titles given to Jesus. He is described first as our **Savior**. It is a word which means deliverer. Jesus is the one that came to deliver us from our sins. When we receive the gift of grace and forgiveness offered to us by Christ, we are delivered from the penalty of our sin – that is eternal death. Jesus would accomplish our salvation by way of the cross. It is through that awful death that we are reconciled back to God.



A second word we see used to describe Jesus is **Christ**. It is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah. Jesus is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament foretold. Over and over we read of the heart’s cry of the people of Israel for a redeemer or Messiah to come. He was to be the seed of David, the root of Jesse, the one in which the scepter would not depart. But Jesus came unto His own people and His own people Israel rejected Him. This salvation is now available to all that call upon the name of God – Hebrew or Greek. Jew or Gentile. Man or Woman. It is God’s gift to the world.

A third word we see proclaimed by the angels is **Lord**. We see this is the same word used in the Old Testament that is ascribed only to God. There are various names of God in the Old Testament. There is El Shaddai, Jehovah Jirah, and Jehovah Nissi, but the one name that is used to describe

God is Lord. He is the One we worship and adore. He is the One all glory and honor are due. He is the One to be worshipped and served.

This triplet combination of names describes this baby born in Bethlehem

Lord Jesus Christ
Κυριος Ιησους Χριστος

as **Savior**, **Christ**, and **Lord**. The Savior of all mankind. The hoped-for Messiah of Israel. The Lord of all creation. This baby Jesus is literally God in the flesh! Immanuel – God with Us!

God didn't send a soldier, a judge, or a great reformer. Instead he sent us what we needed: A Great High Priest who could be our mediator before a Holy God. Do you know Jesus in this way? He is our deepest need and our greatest fulfillment.

C. A Showing Message (v. 12)

Not only was the angels message a soothing message and a saving message, it was also a showing message.

Verse twelve says, *“And this will be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”* The angels pointed the shepherds in the right direction to Jesus.

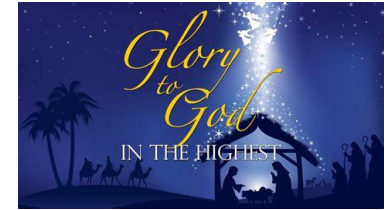
How can we find Jesus today? What can point people to where Jesus is? It is God's word! If we hide God's word in our heart, we will be able to point others to Jesus. We can actually become like the angels, pointing others to the Savior of the World.

You may not be aware of this, but the word Bethlehem literally means the “House of Bread.” Nothing quite satisfies our body like a good piece of bread. How fitting that the life-giving hope for mankind is born in a town named House of Bread.

D. A Shouting Message

The angels brought a soothing message, a salvation message, and a showing message, but what they had to say was worth shouting about. They had gathered there on the countryside of a small insignificant village. But a multitude of the heavenly host came praising God and saying:

*“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, good will
toward men!”*



They were looking in and inquiring as to why God would send His only Son Jesus Christ to earth in this manner. It was to bring peace to men.



The Romans promised *Pax Romana* – Roman peace. Today there is a cry for peace. The Romans actually delivered on their promise. They had given the world peace by brute strength. Any resisters were defeated and destroyed. But God sent Jesus Christ to bring peace with God and peace within!

Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.”* (John 14:27) Paul wrote the Philippians and reminded them, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication,*

with thanksgiving let your requests be made know to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:7-8)

If we can have that kind of peace in our restless hearts, then that is worth praising God about.

*Clay Whittington – “The Shepherd's Song (God With Us)”
by Craig Felker, Michael Farren, and Joel Purdy*

II. A Sermon of Praise – Delivered by the Humble Shepherds (v. 15-20)

The angels were not the only ones preaching a sermon that night. The angels preached a sermon of peace but the humble shepherds preached a message of praise.

The shepherds out in the fields at night were considered the social outcasts. Their duties as shepherds made them unclean and unfit for entering the Temple. It would take a period of cleansing before they were allowed to enter and worship God.



Some have speculated that the time of Jesus' birth was probably closer to April because that was the time of the year shepherds would have been out in the fields at night. They were probably fattening up their sheep preparing them for the upcoming Passover services. Many lambs would be slain in remembrance of Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

How appropriate that the very first people to receive an invitation to see Jesus were the shepherds keeping watch over the sacrificial lambs. Here they came to see the future Lamb of God that would take away the sins for all that claim Jesus as their personal savior.

A. A Message of Obedience (v. 15-16)

The angels told them to go and see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. They didn't stand around debating the reality of angels. They didn't get caught up in philosophical arguments about God – they were obedient and went and saw the child.



How many of us are still stuck debating between two opinions while all God is asking of us is obedience? Have you obeyed the message of the gospel and repented from your sins, taken Jesus as your Savior, and followed that decision by baptism? Failure to be fully obedient is to be disobedient. Being faithful to your wife 99% of the time is to be unfaithful. Getting 99% of the cancer cells, still means you have cancer. God calls us to obedience.

B. A Message of Opportunity (v. 17-18)

Once the shepherds were obedient and went and saw the babe, they had a message and an opportunity to share it with others.

Verse 17 says, *“Now when they had seen Him, they made widely know the saying which was told them concerning this Child.”* It was news too good to keep to themselves. They went around and told everyone about this baby Jesus.

We are called to have that same level of enthusiasm and willingness to share with others about Christ.

C. An Overwhelming Message (v. 20)

As these men returned to their sheep, we see their circumstances had not changed. They were still in charge of stinky sheep. They still were out under the stars. They were still not allowed to enter the Temple because they were considered unclean. But they returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it was told them.



Their hearts had been changed. What a difference Jesus makes! If you know Him, remember your situation may be bad, but your

God is great! Learn to praise God no matter what is happening – Jesus has come into this world to redeem us.

Romans 8:18 reminds us, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

We need to learn to cultivate a heart of praising God, even in the midst of trials, tribulations, and suffering.

**Clay Whittington – “While You Were Sleeping”
by Mark Hall**

III. A Sermon of Rejection – Delivered by the Hardened Innkeeper (v. 7)

There was one more sermon preached that night that is actually not recorded in the scripture. It is the silent sermon of the Innkeeper – a sermon of rejection.

Luke 2:7 says, *“And she brought forth her first born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was not room for them in the inn.”*

The phrase *“because there was no room for them in the inn”* leaves us with so many questions and so few answers. Why was there no room in the inn? Was the city of David, Bethlehem, overrun with people trying to file for the census? Was there a convention of Roman officials meeting there and all the outsiders had to fend for themselves?



Or as some have speculated, was the innkeeper was trying to preserve the dignity of the woman and place her in an out of the way place for such a private moment? Some plays have demonstrated the hardheartedness of the innkeeper as cold and calloused. Others have sympathy for him because he was unable to provide them a room.

Whatever the reason, the inn could not accommodate them, no matter what the need was. This young pregnant woman, ready to give birth was turned away from the inn.

A. A Message of Sadness

What a message of sadness. No room for the Child. No room for the Christ Child. No room for the Savior and King of Creation. No room.

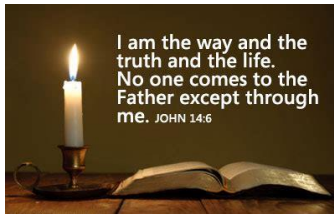


But today there are literally millions of people that have not made room for Christ in their lives. They are so consumed by work, business, family, responsibility, and themselves, that they do not have any time to attend to the things of God. Their priority is not God. There is no room in their life for Christ.

B. A Message of Sorrow

It is a message of Sorrow. Without Jesus there is no hope. Without a savior, we are judged and found lacking. Without Jesus there is no future – there is no life.

Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* (John 14:6) So many people want to believe there is another way to heaven. They are praying their goodness will be good enough for God. But there is only one way and that is Jesus. To reject Jesus is to reject the only way back to God. Open the door to Him today.



C. A Message of Separation

As we look at verse seven, we realize that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were outside while the innkeeper was snug in his bed. While they were laying the Immanuel in a manger – a cattle feeding trough – the innkeeper was warm and secure.

We have no record of the innkeeper receiving the same message that the shepherds received. His rejection of Mary and Joseph resulted in missing the



opportunity to meet His Lord. His comfort became his doom. How many of us are so comfortable that it too may be our doom? Satan would love nothing more than for us to comfortably live out our days in leisure and pleasure – and eventually lose our soul.

We need to wake up and realize today is the day of salvation. We do not need to put it off. Open the door of your heart to Him and live!

The innkeeper’s message was a message of sadness, sorrow, and separation.

Conclusion

As we think about these three Christmas Sermons, we need to look at ourselves. Have we received the message of the angels like the shepherds did? We need to come to know Jesus and come away praising Him and glorifying His name.

it's NOT about me...
it's NOT about you...

Which message is your life preaching this morning?

it's about **JESUS**.

Like the Angels, are you living a life that points men and women to Jesus?

Or, are you like the shepherds, so filled up with His wonder and glory that life is fresh everyday because of Jesus?

Or, would you have to admit that like the innkeeper, you simply have no room for Jesus in your life.

Which one best describes you?

There is still time to turn and find Jesus.

LET US PRAY