

Title: Good News of Great Joy

Text: Luke 2:1-11

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Luke chapter 2. The Gospel of Luke chapter 2. Today is the 1st Sunday in Advent. The first candle glows with the hopes of the people who were given God's promise that He would send Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. Our topic: GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY.

Luke chapter 2..beginning with Vs 1...

(Read 2:1-11)

PRAYER

Now, I am centering ^{my thoughts} ~~my attention~~ this ^{MORNING} ~~morning~~ on that little phrase from the angel in Vs 10.."I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY."

^{Christmas} ~~The Gospel~~, dear friends, is ^{Good News of} GREAT JOY. We are not talking, here, about big depression. We are not talking, here, about being discouraged, or, being disappointed. We are not talking about tension filled holidays with families that would rather be alone instead of being together. We are not talking about jamming into the shopping ^{malls} ~~centers~~ with everybody else and wishing that the lines would hurry up only to discover that someone's computer is not working. We are not talking about all the mess of commercialism and trees and lights and decorations. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE GREATEST NEWS THAT THE WORLD HAS EVER HEARD. THAT GOD INVADED THIS PLANET AND BECAME A MAN TO DIE ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS. We are talking about the real story of Christmas, today, and throughout this month. IT IS GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY.

You know, when ever I read in the Bible the word "JOY", it just thrills my heart. For example...David said in Psalm 16:11 in speaking to the Lord, "In thy presence is fulness of joy." And I say "hallelujah!"

And even when David had sinned so greatly against God in Psalm 51:12 he ^{prayed} ~~said~~, "restore to me the joy of thy salvation." SALVATION IS JOY.

Jeremiah said in chapter 15, "Your Word to me was the JOY and rejoicing of my heart. For I am called by thy name."

And Luke says in chapter 15 verse 7, the words of Jesus, "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more JOY in heaven over one sinner who repents, then over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance." There is JOY in heaven when a soul comes to the Lord.

Romans 15:13 Paul said: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all JOY and peace in believing." All joy fills your heart when you truly believe the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Amen*

Peter said in I Peter 1:8: "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with JOY."

Christmas
Dear friends, the Gospel is joy. GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY. NOW WHY? Because the PROMISES OF GOD ARE BEING FULFILLED That is what this story of Christmas is all about. The wonderful promises or prophecies of God are being fulfilled. And on this first Sunday of Advent, I just want you to see the PROMISES OF GOD BEING FULFILLED IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS.

(1) FIRST OF ALL, IN THE PROPHECY BEING FULFILLED IN JOSEPH AND MARY.

In Vs 4 and 5, we read that Joseph and Mary went from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem in order to be registered for the census that was being taken. Vs 5, also, says that they were engaged and Mary was with child.

Can you imagine for a moment the embarrassment of Joseph and Mary? Mary is

(3)

pregnant and they are not married. They are engaged. And the penalty of the law, if Joseph so wanted to execute it, was to have Mary stoned for immorality. He could have done that. But, imagine being ask and Joseph having to say that he did not cause Mary's pregnancy. "Well, then, how did she get pregnant? " "Do you have five minutes.?"

I think you can realize how difficult that would be to explain. RIGHT? And Yet, you realize, don't you, that this is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The Bible says that Mary would conceive without a human man. She is going to be a virgin when she conceived. Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14 tells us that a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and we will call his name Emmanuel, which means "God with us."

I want you to see something interesting about this prophecy. So, take your Bibles and turn to Isaiah chapter 7. Every little detail concerning the story of Christmas is important. The promises of God are being fulfilled. And there is a part of that story I think we fail to understand. Because we do not read all the verses.

When I come to Christmas, I hear Isaiah 7:14 every where. I see it on signs. I hear it in messages. I hear it in song. And some of you may have wondered if you have read the verses around Isaiah 7:14, what in the world is it talking about.

For example, look at Verse 1 of Chapter 7. ... (Read Vs 1)

Now, A-HAZ is the king of Judah. Up here in the North we have Pek-ah. Pek-ah is the king of Israel. He is called the "son of Rem-a-li-ah. Now Rem-a-li-ah was a good king. But his son, Pek-ah, came into power by treachery and violence. He was a wicked king. And he joins forces with Rez-in, king of Syria. They make a covenant and they are going to wipe out Judah. They have already done some damage. Many hundreds of people

have already died in battle. And Ahaz and his people are scared to death.

Vs 2 says that Pekah and Rezin came down to Ephraim. Ephraim is right next door to Judah. And there is no natural barrier on the northern side of Judah to divide the two countries. It is just rolling hills. And if you were the enemy you could just cross over the border from Ephraim right into Judah. So, the enemy has gathered all her troops and they are ready to come and conquer Judah. This is the story behind the prophecy of the virgin birth.

We keep reading and we are told in vs 2 that "Syria has camped in Ephraim, and Ahaz heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind." In other words, they are scared to death.

Vs. 3: "Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jas'hub." Why mention "the son"? Because his name means "a remnant shall return." So, perhaps Ahaz will see that God will protect them. And God will always protect that Godly remnant. Just send that boy out there. After all that is his name. And maybe that will bring it to his attention.

Vs 4(Read Vs 4-8)

Did you notice that? Vs 8 says, "So that it is no longer a people" They will lose their identity. Now, I ^{ask} you .. HAS THAT PROPHECY BEEN FULFILLED? Oh, Yes. In less than 65 years the armies of Assyria came in and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. They took the 10 northern tribes of Israel captive and populated the area with Assyrians. And these Assyrians inter-married with the captive Israelites. And their children became the ancestries of the Samaritans, whom the Jews have no dealings.

(5)

Did God wipe out the nation of Ephraim on that occasion and fulfill that prophecy?
OH, YES HE DID. And did He do it within 65 years? ^{YES} Now, He is telling Ahaz, "I am going to do it so why are you fearing those folks? You trust me. I will handle it all.

Let me tell you, dear friends, God was gracious to give them that advance knowledge. Not always does God do that. He usually says, "TRUST ME." Even though you don't know what is coming, just trust me. But, here, He tells them how he is going to do it. It is so wonderful.

Now, look at Vs 10 ... (Read Vs 10-12)

Hay, wait a minute. First of all remember who is talking to you. God says: "ASK". And Ahaz responds: "Oh, I wouldn't think of asking."

But, God just told him to ask. God said: "Ahaz, you just ask. And I will give you any sign you want to prove to you."

Wasn't that wonderful of our God? He didn't have to do that. He said to Ahaz: "I am going to give you a sign to prove to you that I will take care of you and you don't have to fear this enemy.

ASK A SIGN. OH, NO! I will not ask. I don't want to test the Lord

"TEST THE LORD!" WOW!! You are testing the Lord by your attitude. You are not trusting me. You are already testing me. So, God, basically gets angry.

NOW, LOOK AT VS 13 ... (READ VS. 13-14)

Now, some folks think that this is the son of Isaiah the prophet. Because he does have a boy born. Chapter 8 records this birth. Just turn over to chapter 8 and notice what is going on. Chapter 8 verse 3 says: "So I approached the prophetess, and she

6

conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the Lord said to me, name him

MA'HER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ. WOW! Can you imagine calling him to dinner? Some name!

So, there are those who teach that that is the virgin who shall conceive. And Christians have made up the story about the virgin birth of Mary. Do you understand? There are some folks who teach that.

But, they are wrong for two reasons. (1) One: Isaiah's wife is not a virgin. She has already had a son. He is mentioned in chapter 7. His name is Shem-Jas-hub. And (2) Secondly, their boy was not called Emmanuel, God with us.

Do you remember the promise of God to David? God promised David that he would not lack a son to set on his throne. And now they are facing extinction. Which means that God could not fulfill his promise. And so God is saying: "Hay! ask a sign and I will show you that I will fulfill my promise.

And Ahaz says: "I am not going to ask for any sign." Hay! You should. God says: "if you ask me, I will tell you a sign that I am going to give you." And that sign is that a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and she will call his name, Emmanuel.

Now, let me ask you. Did God demonstrate in that time that he would protect them? YES, HE DID! Because he brought in the Assyrians. And within 65 years he destroyed that Northern Kingdom. And he protected Judah and that whole historical problem. He protected them. And he demonstrated that by Isaiah's own wife having a child. And before that child would grow up God would destroy Ephraim. And though the virgin that would conceive God will prove to Judah that he would be faithful to them.

He did that in this story in less than 65 years. And he will do it continually

through out history. Until the Messiah is born. The sign to Judah that God would fulfill his promise to David is the virgin birth. A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call Him Emmanuel.

And that, dear friends, is the only way that God could have fulfilled his promise.

WHY? Why is that the only way that God could prove that a son of David would set on the throne? You ask: Why does it have to be a virgin birth? Why was it necessary to have a virgin birth. Why not just a natural birth?

Most people answer that question by saying: to protect the sinlessness of Jesus. Now, in all truthfulness God could have protected it anyway. Right? Because he is a God of miracles. So, why do you have to have a virgin birth? ANSWER: According to the Bible it is to guarantee God's promise to Judah. They will not lack a son from the line of David to set on the throne. WHY IS THAT NECESSARY? Because in the course of events, Judah did not respond to God. I hope you know that. It is recorded in Jeremiah 22. Judah broke her covenant with God in a bad way. She turned her back on God. So, in 586 B.C. God used Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon to conquer Judah. And he sent those folks into captivity. And on the last king of Judah, God put a curse on the line of David and said that a son would never be born of that line.

So, for 400 years Rabbis sat around and ask: How in the world, then, could God fulfill his word. How in the world could we have a son in the line of David to set on the throne when God has cursed that kingly line?

Well, dear friends, God had told them what the answer was long ago. A virgin shall conceive. You see, God protects his own promises by the virgin birth of our

Savior,

Because Joseph was in the line of David through Solomon. That is the kingly line. That is the line that was cursed. But, Mary is in the line of Nathan, David's other son. Was Jesus born out of the lions of David? YES, HE WAS! He was born in Mary, who was in the line of Nathan through David.

But, is Jesus also the heir to the throne? YES, HE IS! When Joseph marries Mary after the birth of Jesus, by Jewish law of adoption, He becomes the legal heir to the throne of David. Fantastic,

I cannot repeat that enough, dear friends, because that is the key in this whole thing. How is God fulfilling His Word? Why is this Christmas Story the Good news of Great Joy? BECAUSE GOD'S PROMISES ARE BEING FULFILLED TO THE VERY LETTER. And without the virgin birth it could never have happened.

LUKE SAYS: "I want you to know that Mary was engaged." Matthew said that she did not know any man. It is very clear that Joseph had had no ^{entire} ~~relationship~~ with Mary until after Jesus was born. The details are clear.

So, when I look at the promises of God being fulfilled, I see them in the condition of Mary and Joseph. And that ^{teaches} ~~teaches~~ me that God will fulfill all His promises to me.

WHAT A TREMENDOUS BLESSING.

(2)Secondly, I see the promises of God being fulfilled in the very character of that child.

^{LOOK at} ~~Let's come back to~~ Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2 verse 7: "And she gave birth to her first born son."

Boy! That is interesting. Let me ask you a question. Who has all the rights? Who is the heir under Jewish law? ANSWER; The first born son.

Look down, please, at Vs 23: "as it is written in the law of the Lord. Every first born male that opens the womb shall be called Holy to the Lord."

Did you know that Jesus had to be the first born son? He had to be. Because that involves the whole issue of inheritance.

But there is more to the character of the child than that. Look at Vs 11: "For today in the city of David there has been born for you a saviour." You see, the whole plan of redemption is here. The inheritance: YES! First born son. REDEMPTION: YES! He is the saviour. Matthew 1:21 says: "to call His name Jesus." WHY? Because He will save His people from their sins." ^{The word} "Jesus" means: "Jehovah saves." Jehovah is salvation.

What else? Vs 11 says: "a saviour who is Christ." The word "Christ" is the Greek for the Hebrew word "Messiah." That is the whole issue of the Jewish hope. We have an inheritance in the first born son. We have redemption in the saviour. And we have the hope of Israel in the word "CHRIST". This is the Messiah. This is the hope of Israel and the hope of the whole world. This is the one. Right here. This baby.

But there is more! Vs 11 says: "in the city of David there has been born for you a saviour, who is CHRIST ... THE ... LORD!" And now we see the issue of authority. Christ is Lord and He demands our obedience.

I mentioned four issues that are involved in the character of that child that is being fulfilled. INHERITANCE -- REDEMPTION -- HOPE -- AND AUTHORITY. All four issues are wrapped up in that first born son called Jesus who is our saviour.

And dear friends, that fulfills the second great prophecy of Christmas. Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 and 7 says: "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and

the government will rest on His shoulders. And His name will be called WONDERFUL
wherefore *Redeemer* *Authority* *Hope*
COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, ETERNAL FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE. There will be no end to the
increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom."

WHY? "THE ZEAL OF THE LORD WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS."

Oh, let me tell you, Christmas is good news of great joy.

Do you know the Christ of Christmas? Have you come to experience this personal
relationship with the Lord of Lords? Dear friends, that is the only way you will ever
experience the Good news of the Gospel. The Bible says: " whoever calls upon the name of
the Lord, will be saved." Call on Jesus today *and experience good news of great joy.*

Let us close in prayer