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Luke 2:1-20
December 24, 2025

Good News Is Louder Than Fear!

We began our Advent journey four weeks ago reflecting on the question... What do you fear? We learned how God met Zechariah, John the Baptist, Mary, and Joseph in their moments of greatest fear. Fear of barrenness, insignificance, lack of purpose, physical harm, social stigma, ostracism, and so much more.

Tonight, I want to drive it home a little more closely and as we think about the fears we bring with us.

If we are Gen A, born between 2010 and 2025, we might be anxious about school safety, friendships, social media, whether or not our crush will say yes, or the constant demands of homework and endless afterschool activities.

If we are Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, we might be worrying about college or career choices, finding a job, financial insecurity, climate change, racking up too much school debt, or a sense of purpose.

If we are Millennial, born between 1981 and 1996, we might be raising young children, navigating life stagnation and career hurdles or wondering if we'll ever be able to purchase a home.

If we are Gen X, born between 1965 and 1980, then we might be wrestling with independence, proper work-life balance, affording retirement, or caring for children at home while now also taking care of parents.

If we are Baby Boomers...we don't have to tell anyone our age...BUT we might be consumed with retirement security, the direction of our nation, failing health, maintaining independence, relevance, or end of life.

My friends, the truth is regardless of our age, worries and fears remain at the forefront of our thinking.

And our fixation on constant and instantaneous news does not help either. Regardless of our news sources, the message we hear over and over again are "BE AFRAID! BE AFRAID! BE AFRAID!" Because we will buy it and consume it more than we will good news!

One person said, "Fear influences our judgment and decision-making in powerful ways."¹

Compare this with the messaging at the time of Jesus' birth.

¹ Lauren Foster, in an article published by the UVA Darden School of Business Website on December 8, 2025, "What Makes Fox News So Persuasive? It Might Not Be What You Think." <https://ideas.darden.virginia.edu/fox-news-versus-cnn-fear-language>

“In those days of Caesar Augustus” tells us a lot. The peace established by Roman Occupation was entirely fear based. For instance it is reported that nearly 2,000 public crucifixions took place near Nazareth around the time of Jesus’ birth. This was for people rebelling against the Roman forces. Then this census took place for two reasons. Taxation robbed impoverished people and subsistence farmers of their hard earned resources. It also showed how many soldiers Caesar could force inscript into his Roman Army. So going to Bethlehem was not a warm and fuzzy homecoming we often romanticize it to be.

Yes, they were afraid.

The census forced Joseph and Mary to leave the safety of their home in Nazareth and travel over 80 miles to his ancestral hometown of Bethlehem in order to be counted. The road was extremely treacherous, physically demanding and laden with thieves and wild prey. Then they faced housing insecurity once they arrived. The Little Town of Bethlehem was most likely bustling with many others who were likewise forced home for the same purpose.

Yes, they were afraid.

Mary might have faced the social stigma of an unexpected pregnancy before her marriage to Joseph. This would have made her vulnerable to judgment and suspicion in their small community. In extreme cases under the traditional law, she could have been severely punishment or even stoned to death. And then there was the uncertainty with having to deliver her baby in strange place, away from family or midwives who could have coached her through it.

Yes, she was afraid.

Joseph, her husband, a humble carpenter might have also experienced being ostracized. Imagine the scorn from his own family for choosing to stand by Mary and raising Jesus as his own child. That could have both social, religious and financial implications as well.

Yes, Joseph was afraid.

The Shepherds were also social outcasts perhaps hiding in the fields away from Caesar’s wrath or their own people who considered them dirty, uneducated, and unworthy of worshipping God in the Jerusalem temple.

Yes, they were afraid.

So there was a lot of fear surrounding everyone in Bethlehem that night. The messages drummed in their heads were “BE AFRAID! BE AFRAID! BE AFRAID!”

But notice that is not the message from God to either Mary, Joseph, the shepherds or even to us tonight.

As they were minding their own business, staying out of Caesar’s horrific shadow, when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. The Greek wording for terrified

actually describes them as having fear upon fear. So on top of all their underlining fear, they feared with even more fear.

But the angel says to them.

“DO NOT BE AFRAID. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for ALL the people.” Not just the faithful, or the rich and powerful, or those who have always considered themselves to be God’s people, but for the poor in spirit, the irreligious, the uncertain, the ostracized, the shunned, the outcasts, the Jew and the Palestinian. In other words, this was good news for ALL people. And ALL in Greek means ALL.

The angel continued this Good News, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

You see this was an important sign for the shepherds. Not only was it the fulfillment of a prophecy, but it was something relatable. Being just a few miles on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the shepherds’ job was to raise sheep for sacrificial offerings in the temple. Not just any sheep...perfect lambs without blemish.

Shepherds often wrapped newborn lambs in strips of cloth, called swaddling clothes, to keep them warm, calm, and, most importantly, to prevent them from getting blemished or hurt. This would ensure that they remained pure for sacrifices in the temple. So when the angel tells them of Jesus’ birth, they knew that this baby wasn’t just any baby, but was symbolic for the “Lamb of God” who would take away the sin of the world.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest and peace to ALL people on earth.”

The Greek word for host is actually a military term *stratius* meaning an army...but not just any army. An army more powerful and audacious than anything Caesar could muster. This was God’s army.

So now they must have experienced fear upon fear upon fear.

What did they do?

Remember “Fear influences our judgment and decision-making in powerful ways.” Yes, they could have hidden further into the hills. Yes, they could have stayed frozen in their footsteps. Yes, they could have remained silent. Or they could not bow to fear, instead move toward God and where God had called them to go.

Thanks to God, they chose the latter. So with great joy, they hurried off. Ran to Bethlehem. Confirmed that indeed what the angel had said was true. They returned, glorifying and praising God, and telling everyone what they had seen.

The Savior of the World was born!

“A Son had been given! And the government would be upon His shoulders, not Caesar’s. And He would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of the increase of HIS government and peace there would be no end.”²

This was good news to them back then and to us today in a world filled with Caesars!

Glory to God in the Highest and peace to ALL people on earth.”

Can you imagine the joy they must have felt?

Can you imagine the freedom they experienced?

Can you imagine how empowered they must have been?

Caesar’s fear inducing schemes had come to an end.

No more fear of being targeted for insurrection and insubordination.

No more insecurity of constantly walking on eggshells.

No more wondering what chaos Caesar was going to cause next.

No more being forced to do Caesar’s terrible bidding.

No more being taxed more than necessary.

No more Caesar.

Glory to God in the Highest and peace to ALL people on earth.”

My friends, this night should bring fear and trembling to the hearts of every Caesar in our world. Because this night reminds us that God’s kingdom reigns supreme. And this Jesus, born in a manger, is Lord of all and King of kings. And He will have the last word. He will hold them accountable for every evil deed they have ever done. So we do not need to be afraid of anything this world or the powers of this world might throw at us.

For the Apostle Paul reminds us, “We are more than conquerors.” Because Jesus came down from heaven, was born of the virgin Mary, and became human so that we would display his fear conquering love to ALL people on earth. Therefore, “[we] can be convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything in all of creation, [nor any of the fears we brought with us tonight] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is [anchored] in Christ Jesus our Lord.”³

So let us celebrate tonight with joy knowing that God is perfect love who has come down from heaven in human form, Jesus Christ. Let celebrate Jesus’ victory over sin and death, and the evil powers of this world. Let us instead love

² Isaiah 9:6-7

³ Romans 8:37-39

one another for God is love and there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.⁴ So Let us shout it from the mountaintops...

Glory to God in the Highest and peace to ALL people on earth.”

Christ the child is born for you and me! DO NOT FEAR! DO NOT FEAR! DO NOT FEAR!

Merry Christmas!

⁴ 1 John 4:7-21