Sermon December 24, 2018

Luke 2:1-20

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“I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

I wonder how many of you received good news this year? Not just okay news, like the dishwasher was only clogged, it doesn’t need to be replaced, or that you found a lost sock.

But GOOD NEWS – the kind that knocks the wind out of you, where you stand in awe as your mind processes the news.

I hope most of you have at least once in your life received such news.

Heaven knows we need, every now and then, to hear good news that shakes our world. Where once we’ve heard it our perspective on life changes forever.

I’m talking about news that directly affects you, not what you read in the newspaper or online, but news that you hear first hand.

I think it’s safe to say that part of the experience of receiving good news is that it comes as a shock.

If you expected it, it wouldn’t have such an impact.

In order for news to change your thinking about the world, it has to have that element of surprise.

The shepherds in the field that night, the night they were told of our Savior’s birth, were shocked by the news. Shocked and terrified.

Well, at first they were terrified, then once they came around they were overwhelmed with joy.

And isn’t that usually the case? We start out afraid of what this news means, because it’s a big deal, and then once it sinks in we move from fear, to wonder, to awe, then to joy.

One moment the shepherds are watching their flock by night, and all of a sudden an angel comes and lights up the whole place.

That’s terrifying!

The biggest surprise, though, is that this was the way God chose to announce His coming to live among us.

The shepherds were the first ones to receive this news. God chose them to be the ones to spread the word.

You wonder why them? Why didn’t God choose to have someone with authority, power, or prestige to first learn of this event? Someone who would spread the news like a king would announce an edict.

By choosing the shepherds to hear the news first, God established the type of kingdom He wanted to bring into the world; a kingdom where people like you and me are given the responsibility of sharing the message of such divine joy.

After all, who would listen to the shepherds? Their families and neighbors. Why would they believe the shepherds? Because they knew the shepherds had nothing to gain.

A king, or other authoritarian figure, would react differently. Using this information for his own benefit, we all know knowledge is power. This was the type of knowledge that if spread would undermine a king’s authority – so it would need to be kept secret, or worse gotten rid of.

Which is exactly what Herod tried to do once he learned of the event.

No, God chose to have the shepherds spread the news, because they would share it joyfully.

Just as joyful as you and I are tonight, as we celebrate Christmas Eve.

My prayer for each of you this night is that the Good News of Christ’s birth still has the power to take your breath away. That the coming of our Lord into your life in a new way this year will bring you joy and reason to celebrate.

Most of all I hope that this evening you find that sense of peace that passes all understanding – for it is in taking into our hearts the miracle of Christ’s birth we are able to say, “I believe.”