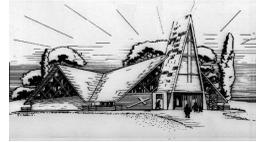




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Christmas Eve

For unto you is born a Saviour!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Lk 2, 9-11:

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

• **10** And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people.

• **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts for the Word that reveals to us the birth Your Son, our Lord, and gives us certainty in our hearts which results in joy of salvation! Amen.*

• **Dear Israel of God!**

• It was a quiet night out in the fields, there, where the people had to keep watch over the sheep. Others could sleep inside. They had to sleep outside- the shepherds were outsiders ... let us not forget the outsiders tonight. The outsiders of society, especially those on the outside of the church. God does not forget them. They got the message first!

• They were sitting in darkness- they didn't know what was coming, better, who was coming!

• Then an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them! Now we could think, wow, what a sight- what a romantic glow it must have been, but we read [9]: *"... they were terribly frightened"*. Why this terrible fear? Why were they afraid of the glory of the Lord which they were observing with their own eyes, which was shining all around them?

• Whenever people encountered the glory of the Lord in sight, as witnessed in the Bible, they were frightened to death! Wherever sinners encounter the true sight of the outer glory of God they fall into the dust! A sinner cannot stand before the intense, pure, visible glory of the LORD!

• Here, the sheer bright shining light reveals the first thing to us: Sinners cannot

face the glory of God! If the night would have ended here, we also would have had running shepherds, but in all directions, away from the light, in terrible fear! What story would they have told- *'a scary thing happened to us last night!'* There would have been lots of speculation of what it could have been.

- Everything changes, when the messenger of God, the angel, starts to speak to them. The message changes everything! It is a glorious message! That is why it was framed by the outer glory of the Lord! It is the message which turns fear into joy: *"Fear not, for behold, I proclaim to you the good news of a great joy that will be for all of the people."* The shepherds judged what they saw all wrong according to their own experience and seeing with their own eyes!

- The glory of the Lord did not come to frighten people. It is genuine good news, the best news you can hear on this earth: Fear not, you sinners, this night is about the great joy of God, unto you! And it is proclaimed, that is, it is handed out into your ears and by the work of the Holy Spirit, into your hearts!

- The names of the shepherds are not given to us. You may see yourself in them! This message marks a new beginning of joy, a never ending joy, because it is not a hollow word- there is a real content that fills it, something very substantial has appeared:

- [11] *"For unto you is **born** this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."* What a most beautiful verse to hear tonight! The great joy of God is literally born- there we have the literal fulfilment of God's promises of joy. God's great joy is born right into this dark world for everyone to embrace, not to run away from, but to embrace in our hearing and understanding, to clarify our minds!

- The glory of the Lord shines, God's Word reveals the glory of the Lord, it is clarified, it becomes clear, for everyone to know, what the Lord has done unto you- He was born as a baby unto you- to be your Saviour, to be your Christ, to be your Lord, although you are still a sinner! His Glory, His great joy reaches out to us, comes fully to us, with everything He has to give to create a great joy unto us!

- Here is clarity, here is certainty and insight in who this baby is! It has become so modern to claim not to know. The unknown God is worshipped more than the revealed God. It has become cool to state that one is not certain about almost

anything about even Jesus. Its all about making your own experience and then make up what it meant for oneself afterwards! You take the experience but keep your own mind!

•How different the real God entered His creation! He came with certainty- He was born, once He was born He was there. He came with clarity with proclamation of the Gospel. He could be found by the shepherds. They found Him by the signs, that He was wrapped in swaddling cloth's lying in a manger, a crib. Even His name proclaimed God's mission with Him. Jesus, He will save them from their sins. The Light shines and people find Him, they come to know Him by the proclamation. The Word of God is clear.

•In fact the Light shines on the whole of the OT Scriptures and puts them in their right perspective: They point to the coming of Jesus, the true son of David and Christ our LORD. He is the only current king of God's Israël and because He came to keep that position forever there is no other king of God's Israël. He will rule with righteousness.

•There we have the King of kings! Yet, He rules by giving, not by taking- from His Birth to His Death, including His Resurrection, His Ascension- all of it spells out one thing- gift to the world. Jesus is the categorical Gift of God to the world. Titus 3 reveals this so well, *"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."*

•Salvation and Sanctification is completely God's gift to the world sitting in darkness. God is gladly giving this gift to each and everyone of you. He does everything to save you from your sins and to make you an heir of His Israël. As we hear the Word of God we receive what He promises. As we are baptised in Baptism, by water and the Spirit, God cuts the New Testament with us. We become heirs of Him. We become His children. We have a heavenly Father who promises to never forsake us, unless we reject His gift!

•There is one big enemy of the gift of God, and that is works-righteousness or self-righteousness, this idea that there must be something good, something very

small maybe, something minutely small, but still something good in us, that is in our old Adam which can reach out, or work out which can at least make ones own decision for God- at least it remains my decision. How do we get into sin? We fall into sin. We make our decisions that we will never do this again, but then there we have just done it again- we fall into sin in-spite of our good intentions and decisions. That is the truth! There is nothing good in me, that is in my flesh, meaning my old Adam, says Paul!

- However, this does not take anything away from the good news tonight!
- The Lord gives you His glory and insight tonight, His power tonight, to let go of that last bastion of the old Adam. No, salvation is not my decision. Let go off it, become a beggar before God, like the shepherds, see yourselves in their shoes. The decision stuff just gets in the way.
- The Lord pours out His Love and Loving-kindness onto you, in whom there is nothing good. This gift of God is all you need. Receive it with joy and let Jesus take care of your uncleanness, with God's blessing! The Glory of God is His Gift to the world. His Son is Gift. God is a God who rules by giving. He Himself is joyful about giving His best gift. If you ever think, the Gift of God is too good to be true, then please realise, that is it!
- The Lord Himself is joyful about His gift. He has pleasure in giving, it is a great joy to give it to the poor in spirit. And as you receive it tonight in your hearing, know this, that by receiving the gift God gives the right worship of God happens. Paganism teaches us that people must sacrifice to their gods before they can hope to receive anything. With God the Father it is completely the other way round. By receiving from Him, we honour Him, we trust Him- that is faith. By giving us His gift in such a joyful manner God conquers our heart of stone!
- *"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."* **Amen.**
- *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"* **Amen.**