



“GOOD NEWS OF JOY AND PEACE”

By Mary Mayko 2007

Luke 2: 8-11 NIV “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord appeared unto them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you Good News of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Christ the Lord.”

It was an astonishing and life changing event that occurred in the midst of an ordinary night of faithful shepherding, men just doing their jobs so they could take care of their families! During a mundane chore this heavenly visitation brought great joy and peace to the shepherds that night!

How wonderful we feel when we receive good news! It brings joy to the heart and peace to the mind! This is especially welcome when we have struggled with some problem and feel worn out and worried! Sometimes we bring that burden to the Lord and trust He will work things out for the best, but our minds and souls have become weary while waiting for the answers!

The Bible often speaks of how God’s people were oppressed or under some attack. Their condition was sometimes a result of their disobedience and the misery was designed to wake them up to repentance and restoration! What joy filled their hearts when they turned again to the Lord for the help they needed to establish peace within their hearts and minds once more! Isaiah was a Prophet who brought God’s Word to His people time and again! When they listened and obeyed, God brought about amazing victories for them!

Isa.52:5-8 LB “And now, what is this?’ Asks the Lord. ‘Why are My people enslaved again, and oppressed without excuse? Those who rule them shout in exultation, and My name is constantly blasphemed, day by day. Therefore I will reveal My name to My people and they shall know the power in that name. Then at last they will recognize that it is I, yes I, who speaks to them. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring the happy news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns. The watchmen shout and sing with joy, for right before their eyes they see the Lord God bring His people home again.”

Don’t we feel like just hugging a person that brings us good news! That kind of messenger is always welcome! If *you* happen to be the one who brings good news to someone else, you also share the joy as you watch their face light up with delight! No wonder Isaiah called the feet of those who do so, beautiful!

Not every problem or trial we experience is a direct result of disobeying the Lord, but it is a good time for us to do a self examination to be sure we have not drifted away from the Lord or fallen into a sinful practice of some kind! If we have, we must repent so our peace will return to us! Forgiveness is truly good news! But sometimes God just visits us to bring fresh joy and peace!

1 Peter 5:8-9 LB “Be careful- watch out for attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls around, looking for some victim to tear apart. Stand firm when he attacks. Trust the Lord; and remember that other Christians all around the world are going through these sufferings too.”

There is joy in this good news that even under fierce attacks from Satan, we can stand fast and trust in the Lord. It is a comfort and true joy to know that the Lord can grant us His peace in the midst of trials and suffering! While we don’t like to hear about others suffering, it helps us not to focus on the lies Satan throws at us, such as: “You must have *really did something terrible for the Lord to punish you that way!*” Here is another favorite of his when we feel low and peace seems to elude us! “You think God would really listen to *your prayers?* Just see how He answers everyone else, *but just ignores you!*”

We need to remember that Satan is always busy at his work of harassment. We can have the victory over those negative thoughts by looking to the Lord for His peace and grace in our times of need! That of course, is a choice we have to make as individuals! Look at the reminder Jesus gave to the disciples before the Cross! John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!”

Isa.26:3 LB “He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in Him, whose thoughts turn often to the Lord!”

Have you ever noticed that within Paul’s Epistles, his Writings contain this greeting of encouragement? Look at this quote! “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” Check it out! It seems Paul wanted to reassure each person and the church of the blessings of God’s grace and peace! That is good news of joy to Believers of this day also! We need to thank God for His grace and peace as it is always available to us if we will only draw on it!

“Father in Jesus Name, we thank you for granting us the privilege of walking in Your peace, even in the midst of trials! We thank You that Your strength overflows to us as we think of the wonders Your Names provide for us! Wonderful! Counselor! Prince of Peace! Almighty God! No One is above You or Your powers! Thank You for bringing Your perfect peace to us, first as a little Babe, then as a Man who showed us God’s ways, and then as our Savior and High Priest! Amen!”

Isaiah 9: 6 NIV “For unto us a Child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

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**THE GIFT OF GIFTS!
By Rev. J Kehl Golding**

Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of ourselves; it is the Gift of God,” 2 Corinthians 9:15 “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift.”

Gifts! Gifts! GIFTS!! The media makes sure we get the message - Christmas is all about gifts! Of course we know the bottom line of all this is money. Our culture revolves around money and what it will bring us.

However, the FIRST CHRISTMAS was all about the *word* Gift! – John 3:16 “For God so loved the world He *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The angel of the LORD *gave* “good tidings of great joy” to the shepherds. “For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the LORD.” Luke 2:11. The Gift? The long awaited Messiah has come!!

Luke 2:15-17 “And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the LORD hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.”

The shepherds freely ACCEPTED this GIFT - the wonderful message the angel *gave* them, and went to witness of it, to all they met.

The men of the East - the Magi - the three wise men - the priestly caste of the Medes and Persians. They were astrologers, they knew a king had been born, and inquired of Herod the King; “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” [Matt.2:2]

They brought GIFTS - gifts fit for a King; royalty gets the finest. This gold speaks of Christ’s divinity – God - the man Christ Jesus. This whole thought allows us to know we can trust in our LORD Jesus Christ.

The next GIFT was frankincense, a white gum, sweet smelling, and used as incense, especially at the time of sacrifice, and prayer, Reminding us of the sacrifice of the God-Man, Christ Jesus for our sins, the price of our Redemption.

Myrrh was the final GIFT, a red gum used in preparing a body for burial. This reminds us the human aspect of Christ: God - "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us [and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father] full of grace and truth, [John 1:14] Again emphasizing His sacrifice for our sins, the sins of the world, the ATONEMENT for all time.

CHRISTMAS is all about a GIFT!

The question is what will you do with God's GIFT to you? The answer to that question is **ONLY** one of two responses - acceptance or rejection. The answer determines your life here, and where you will spend Eternity- forever and ever and ever and ever and ever!

Romans 3:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the GIFT of God is Eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD!

Make this the best Christmas ever, and accept God's GIFT to you! I close with an old English Carol.

"THE TRUTH FROM ABOVE"

This is the TRUTH sent from above,
The Truth of God, the God of love.
Therefore don't turn me from your door,
But hearken all both rich and poor.

And at the season of the year
Our blest Redeemer did appear;
He here did live, and here did preach,
And many thousands He did teach.

Thus He in love to us behaved,
To show us how we must be saved;
And if you want to know the way,
Be pleas'd to hear what He did say.

Author Unknown
An Old Traditional English Carol [vs. 1, 4, and 5]

Have a Blessed Christmas Season as you walk with Him!
Rev. J. Kehl Golding



“UNEXPECTED GUESTS!”

**By Mary Mayko 2004
Luke 2:8-20**

Vss.15-20 NIV “When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another. “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child. And all who heard it was amazed ay what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

Unexpected guests in the middle of the night! Mary was overjoyed with the birth of her son Jesus, but it seemed to her things had been a bit unusual all day and night! No rooms left in the Inn in Bethlehem when they arrived in Bethlehem. Birth pangs so great she knew she could not travel further. The Innkeeper kindly offered the stable out back. Among the cattle her little baby boy was born! She laid him in a manger there as she rested from the rigors of childbirth.

Suddenly, the place was filled with shepherds in the middle of the night! Since Bethlehem was only about 5 miles from Jerusalem, some have thought these shepherds may have been taking care of the Temple sheep and lambs used for sacrifices. These shepherds would have been at the lower end of the social status in those days! Most people would not even associate with them, but their work was vital to fulfilling the altar requirements in the Temple!

These shepherds would have understood the term “Lamb of God” long before most Pharisees would realize the significance of Jesus being call the “Lamb of God”! Isn’t It amazing the angels of the Lord came to these shepherds and not to the priests or Pharisees! The shepherds had the honor of being Jesus’ first visitors after his birth! As they honored this Child they probably did not realize that this Baby would some day become *their Great Shepherd!*

Mary listened attentively to all the shepherds said. She treasured their words in her heart, drawing on them and their meanings from time to time! Have you ever wondered what she may have been thinking about as she bathed him, fed him, changed him and carried him about? She was a very young woman and her life had already been filled with so many unusual events!

When the shepherds left Mary, Joseph and Jesus, they went into town shouting with excitement! How startled the people must have been when these shepherds made yet another unexpected visit in the middle of the night! The Bible said they did not waste any time in spreading this News to the whole town! I doubt anyone there got much sleep that night! I can just imagine them gathered in the streets of Bethlehem in the bright moonlight to discuss all these unusual happenings!

Mary herself had already had unexpected visits which included an angel and the Holy Spirit! After she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit, she visited her cousin Elizabeth who was also pregnant. As soon as Elizabeth saw Mary, she was filled with the Holy Spirit also! Mary sang a beautiful song at Elizabeth's house, revealing her love for God and knowledge of Old testament Scriptures! She was a simple girl with an amazing change in her life!

Her pregnancy had shocked Joseph who was appalled that his beloved apparently had been unfaithful! He would have divorced her except for the fact that Joseph also had a visit from an angel who assured him of Mary's purity. In God's timing, they traveled to Bethlehem near the time of her due date to register for taxation. This fulfilled OT prophecy that says the Child must be born there! (Micah 5:2)

We see much strength in Mary as a result in fully trusting in the Lord through all the dangers she had to face! What happens to us when we face unexpected or unusual events, do we react with alarm or confidence in the LORD? Do you ever ponder or meditate on the things God has revealed to you? Are you convinced He will work them all out for good in your life?

Have you met this Jesus Christ personally? If so, are you filled with wonder and delight as you tell others about Him? With this Christmas Season upon us, many begin their celebrations of Holidays. It is a perfect time to share your testimonies of how this Babe lived and died and rose again and the changes He has made in your life! Psalm 92:1-2 NIV "It is good to praise the LORD, and make music to your name O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night."

Psalm 98:4 NIV "Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music."

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