

# The Gospel at Advent – to the Nations

## Luke 2:1-21

*Pastors Russ Kennedy and Tim Rech*

*From the introduction...*

Advent (Christmas) is NOT about

Fables for kids rooted in pagan myths...

Consumer spending and debt...

Beautiful decorations and lights...

Advent may be about...

Parents and a miraculous conception...

Shepherds and angelic announcements...

Wise men from afar and a guiding star...

A dangerous and deadly king...

But the advent of Jesus is primarily about the gospel.

Jesus' birth is good news because it fulfills the Scripture...

Jesus' birth is good news because it means God's purposes and plans are being executed...

Jesus' birth is good news because it means that God has experienced the life of man...

Jesus' birth is good news because it means that someone will perfectly keep God's Law...

Jesus' birth is good news because it means that there is a righteous man whose sacrificial life can redeem His people...

Jesus' birth is good news because it means our salvation...

Jesus' birth is good news because it means God's kingdom has come...

During this advent season, we will think together about the gospel at Advent. This will be preached in both AM and PM gatherings. This will be intensely personal and practical. The first two sermons will be how the gospel at advent impels us outward into the nations and the neighborhoods. So tonight, we will be talking about how the gospel demands missions. Pastor Tim Rech and I will be sharing the sermon. Next Sunday morning, Pastor Tim Nixon and I will be sharing the sermon.

### Error! Reference source not found.**The Text**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give

birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

## **The Exposition - Russ**

Let us begin by observing the text that Luke wrote about the birth of Jesus.

### **The Glory**

The Advent of Jesus is filled with glory.

### **In the Hardness**

The shepherds of that day were usually not well thought of. They were not glamorized as they are today. It was a hard life. It was a dangerous life. Though many were skilled in handling sheep, many were former criminals who could find no other work. So there were shepherds who were skilled and cared for the sheep. There were hirelings who did it as a menial job for a minimum of pay. The glory of God softens the deep hardness of their life.

### **In the Night**

Luke sets this scene in the night. It is a time of great darkness in the world. The Roman empire with all its power and perversity ruled the western world. Israel's worship of the Lord had deteriorated into religious legalism and rationalism. Yes, it was the hours between sunset and dawn. It was also the time deep spiritual darkens. The glory of God shines brightest in the darkness.

## About the Lord

The angels appearing to the shepherds brighten the darkness. They filled the sky with radiant glory. But this glory was not about them though it did come through them. This glory was shining in the night because the angels brought a message, an announcement. The glory of God is ultimately the aim of the good news.

## The Grace

The angels come with an announcement that will bring grace to God's people.

## To Lowly People

Think about this. The message came first to lowly people. Shepherds were some of the lowest people in society. They were often in the fields for long periods. They smelled of sheep. They were not accepted in polite company. Jesus in his ministry will talk about shepherds; but we do not meet them except at his advent. So the providence of God had these lowly shepherds on a hillside near Bethlehem. The grace of God sent the angelic messengers to speak of the coming of the Messiah and to send them to seek Him out. The grace of God often comes first to the lowliest of people.

## With Awakening Power

These shepherds are not stirred up to see what God has done. What the angels said awakened them to get up from their flock and to go. Their rising up is not merely natural curiosity. It is the grace of God awakening their hearts through the good news that had been proclaimed to them. The grace of God does the inward work that moves the outward response.

## For God's Praise

At the birth of Jesus both the angels and the shepherds give praise to God. The angels praise God in the message they proclaim. The shepherds return to their work praising God for what He has done. At the center of this praise is the amazing story of God becoming man, of Jesus the second person of the Godhead taking on humanity. The One who was eternally face-to-face with the Father, who created all things, who sustains all things was now a suckling baby lying in a feeding trough. This is the beginning of wonders. As the story unfolds, there will pile wonder upon wonder until a horrifying death and a glorious resurrection. The grace of God motivates the praise of God for Jesus' coming.

## The Gospel

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

## About the Lord Jesus

The good news of great joy is that Christ the Lord was born. He has come to be the savior. The good news at advent is about the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us never forget

that whether at this season or at any season of the year. The gospel is not about us. It is for us, yes. But it is about Jesus.

### **From the Scriptures**

The angelic announcement is all taken from and referenced to the Scriptures. They are not saying anything new or novel. They are announcing to the shepherds what the Scriptures have proclaimed, promised and prophesied all along. The gospel for all peoples in all ages is from the Scriptures.

### **For our Salvation**

The gospel is for our salvation. The gospel is not only about how we may become saved, but also about how we live as saints. So it is for our salvation in our conversion, for our transformation until our glorification.

### **The Going**

And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

### **With the Message**

The shepherds tell the good news they had been told. Yes, they have personal experience of the amazing wonder of the story. But the message is not primarily what has happened to them. The message of the gospel is about what we have been told.

### **To those Near**

The shepherds are telling people around them. Here they are going to their neighborhoods. What God has done fills them with courage and clarity to speak. Awakened hearts now speak with opened mouths.

### **For the World**

This story is not just for those near to Bethlehem. It is not just for Jews. It is for all the world. It has gone out into the world through the Apostles, through the Scriptures preached and proclaimed to the world through the ages.

So, the advent of Jesus in the gospel is to be proclaimed. It demands missions...

Part 2 – Tim Rech