

Christmas is About Gospel Joy for All People (Luke 2:10)

We've just sung and heard sung some great music about the greatest event in human history, our great Savior is born who is Christ the Lord. The word gospel means good news or good tidings of salvation, it's really great news to bring great joy to a great multitude of people. In the words of the herald angel who brings glory to the newborn King, the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night heard this news of Luke 2: *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

Those words are good tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, for all people who believe. Heaven calls to earth to fear not, to behold the gospel that meets our hopes and fears. There may be many fears, struggles here, but heaven says fear not, behold Jesus. 'Fear not, the angel said, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind, glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind.' To a world of war, trouble, anxiety, Jesus offers peace on earth to all people. I want to look at some of the '*all people*' in Luke's gospel this good news of the Savior came to. If you don't have a Bible and want to follow along, you can use the pew Bible in front of you and Luke's gospel begins on p. 555. If you don't own a Bible, take that one home as our gift to you this Christmas. Let's take that phrase at the end of Luke 2:10 '*joy which shall be to all people,*' and I want to look together at some of the '*all people*' in all walks of life this good news gave joy to in difficulties. It's one of the themes of Luke's gospel, the gospel is *to all people, for great joy in Jesus.*

Look at Lk 1, v. 5, where it says in the days of King Herod there was a man named Zechariah, and his wife was named Elizabeth. They were both godly believers, v. 6 says, v. 7 adds: '*But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.*' Only Luke records this and the angels announcing good news of great joy that's for all people. This joy isn't based on good things in life making happy people, it's joy based on grace to hurting people, it's gospel joy despite suffering like Elizabeth. Luke's gospel gives examples of all people Christ's good news is for. This gospel joy is for

1. All ages and stages of life

The good news didn't come first to Israel's elites in their prime of life, it was an elderly couple with no kids, a situation many viewed unfavorably. A barren woman was seen by their world as being cursed by God, but God shows the whole world how blessed she would be, for the joy of all people.

The angel first delivered good news of great joy for all people to this couple in v. 19 where the angel says to Zechariah: *"I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to **bring you this good news.**"* Before the shepherds heard the angel say *'I bring you good news,'* this old man heard it first and *'fear not'* in v. 13, like the angel also told the shepherds. Here the good news was that Elizabeth would have a son in her old age. Her barren womb would bear Messiah's prophesied forerunner, his name would be John, the greatest man born of woman according to Lk 7:28. Look at 1:14: *And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice...*

Same ideas from Lk 2:10, the angel says *'I bring you good news'* and speaks of future joy for many of all people groups. It begins with an elderly couple as an example of how the gospel is for all. Then the angel brings good news to a girl named Mary (probably a teenager, other end of spectrum of ages). This young virgin hears Jesus will be miraculously conceived in her womb. In v. 39 she rushes to see Elizabeth. v. 42 records Elizabeth's great joy at the good news: *and she exclaimed with a loud cry "Blessed are you [happy, joy or highly favored] among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! [a Jewish expression for an unborn baby] ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.*

Elizabeth was 6 months along, v. 26 says, she's finishing her 2nd trimester. v. 39 says it was only days after Mary conceived that she rushed to see her, so at this point Mary's embryo is the earliest stage of life. But God's Spirit moved Elizabeth to recognize the life already in Mary's womb in v. 42. And in v. 43 she calls Mary just days into her pregnancy a 'mother.' It's not just a little clump of cells in there, she knows the Lord is in there, and Elizabeth's unborn baby that's 20-some weeks along recognizes it and jumps for joy in Jesus' presence. To God motherhood and life begins at conception, not birth

There's no more vivid way to show God's involvement with all people from the oldest of the elderly to the young teenage mother to the unborn person days after conception. The great joy to all people included the joy of John in the womb 3 months before he's born, and an old lady baby shower in v. 57: *And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.* Great joy showered Elizabeth and in v. 47 Mary also speaks of her great joy in the good news of God her Savior. He's a God of every age and stage of life, from the womb to the tomb. His grace can erase the stigma of barrenness and an unwed teenage pregnancy.

In chapter 2, v. 36 it also comes to an 84-year-old woman named Anna who comes to see the newborn baby Jesus brought to the temple. The text says as a young virgin Anna had been married 7 years but then her husband died, it says in 2:37 she had been a widow to age 84: ...*She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.* ³⁸ *And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all*

...

Anna had probably been a widow for over 50 years, single and alone many years, but God had not forgotten her and God now favors her with great joy that's for all people in the Savior born as Christ the Lord. I am so joyful we have so many senior saints in this place. I know some of you are lonely and have lost loved ones like Anna did, or some of you who are elderly may feel at times you're not needed or don't have a place and it's the turn for younger families. My friend, that's not true - we need you! Your place is vital in the house of God like Anna; serving, being at church regularly, praying for us, and modeling thankfulness and speaking of Christ to all looking to Him for redemption. Anna may not have had much earthly family but she wanted to be with the family of God every chance she got, night and day for worship. Some of you have lost earthly family but like Anna, the Lord who cares for you sustains you as you surround yourself with His family. We need more Annas in every part of the life of our church, older women helping younger women, and the younger should minister to the older encouraging, honoring

[Jesus honored many widows in His ministry, Lk 7, 18, 21, etc.]

The angel said in Lk 2:10 gospel joy is for *all people*. All people is old folks and young people and others in between. It's for gray hairs and youth with crazy colored hair. It's for those with walkers and toddlers learning to walk. It's for widows and 'littles,' Jesus cares for all. Later in Luke's gospel, young ones received special attention and affection from the Savior. Lk 18:15 says they brought infants to Jesus and He welcomed them and said His kingdom belongs to those like kids, let them come, don't hinder them (Mk 10:13-16). Mark's gospel says Jesus was indignant at the disciples who tried to stop the babies and toddlers from coming to Him and He blessed them. Jesus loves the little children of all the peoples of the world, and so must His followers.

In Lk 9 Jesus took a child by His side and said '*whoever receives this child in my name receives me*' (9:47-48). In other words, receiving children in the name of Jesus, for His sake, is receiving Jesus. How we treat children in the name of Jesus is how we're treating Jesus, and whatever we do for the least of His brethren, we do for Jesus (Mt 25:40). Children, from unborn children to infants to toddlers to teenagers are part of the all people the Savior is for.

Jesus became a baby and a child who lived to be an adult so He could be the Savior of all people who trust in Him. Away in a manger a little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head so little ones could pray 'Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay, Close by my forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and take us to heaven to be with Thee there.' It's simple childlike faith that saves, coming to Jesus like He came in the world, naked, needy for all, no accomplishments, just helpless dependence on Him. In Lk 9 Jesus showed special compassion to a young boy (9:38-42). In Lk 8 Jesus showed special love to a 12-year old girl (8:41-42, 54-55). Children are an important part of *all people* of Lk 2:10 in God's kingdom and church. Gospel joy is for all ages and stages of life, that's the first point. It's also for

#2. All Places and Stations in Society

Back in Lk 2:8 notice who the heavenly messengers sent this gospel news of great joy to for all people. It wasn't to government leaders, though they need it for sure! It wasn't to Senators in Rome or philosophers in Greece or great men of the world. It wasn't even to the religious leaders of Israel that the angels came to announce Messiah's birth. Heaven came down to lowly shepherds doing a night shift in fields near a little town called Bethlehem.

- shepherds were *uneducated* men, not scholars or scribes of scripture
- they were considered *unclean* by society as they lived with animals
- their testimony was considered *unreliable* in court, the writings say
- this was *unexpected* for the birth of a king. Normally he'd be born in a palace and birth announcements would go to important people like nobles and high society. But God's ways are not man's ways and this is no ordinary king. He's a Savior angels said is for '*all people*.' His birth was in a barn or cave, His crib an animal food box, His birth announcement only went to those considered *unimportant*, the lowly of society, to shepherds: '*unto you is born a Savior ... for all people*'

Christianity is for the working man. Christ's birth wasn't announced to guys with advanced degrees, to the religious or Israel's rich and famous, the high and mighty of society. It was to graveyard-shift-working lower-level lower-income long-hour lowly shepherds low on the totem pole of farmhands who apparently hadn't worked up yet to the day shift. Christ's birth is heralded to them for '*all people*.' Shortly after birth, Jesus' family spent a year homeless and refugees in Egypt (Mt 2). His childhood back in Israel was in a peasant home with normal working class people and His disciples were all working class men. Most of Christ's life from age 12-30 was probably spent in a small carpenter shop with his father helping him run their small business.

As a baby in a manger, and later in life, Jesus had no place to lay His head. Jesus left heaven's riches to come to earth's poor to offer riches in heaven. This is how Paul summed up Christmas and the gospel in 2 Cor 8:9 *'you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.'*

Flip forward to chapter 4 where Jesus as a 30-year-old comes back to His hometown village in Nazareth and does the scripture reading that Sabbath from Isaiah. Look at 4:18 *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. "* ²⁰ *And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. "*

The coming of Christ was to fulfill the prophecy of good news proclaimed to the poor. The first Noel the angels did say came to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay. 'All people' includes poor shepherds, the homeless, the refugees, the lower class, all of which Jesus was at some point in His life, and His gospel is for all places and for every station of life. The end of v. 18 mentions the oppressed needing liberation. He was oppressed in this chapter and in chapter 22 He was depressed and in extreme agony and troubled soul (22:44). Hebrews 4 says Jesus was tempted as we are without sin so He can help us. In Lk 4:35 He liberated a man oppressed by a demon. In v. 38 Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, setting her free from an oppressive fever. So, yes, the 'all people' in Luke's gospel include mother-in-laws! It's *all people*.

- later in this gospel Jesus shares with a lawyer (10:25, yes, lawyers, too!)
- *all people* in Luke's gospel includes not just lawyers but lepers (5:12)
- *all people* includes corrupt tax collectors (3:12, 5:27, 18:11-14, 19:1-9)
- *all people* includes Simon the Zealot (6:15, some of his party were into the *sacarii*, open to government overthrow by terrorist tactics, assassins)
- *all people* includes criminals like the one on the cross next to Jesus who begs Jesus to remember him in His kingdom and he is saved (23:39-43)
- *all people* includes slaves He healed and honored (Lk 7, 12:37-43 NAS)
- *all people* include the disabled, diseased (5:12-26) doubled over (13:11)
- *all people* includes women who had a low place in their society but high value to Jesus in service (8:2-3, 48), 1st to witness His rising (Lk 23-24)
- *all people* includes an immoral woman repenting He saved (Lk 7:37-50)
- *all people* includes rebellious prodigals who repent and return (Lk 15)

The gospel is for all ages and stages of life, all places and stations in society
 ... #3. All Nations And Ethnic Groups

The good news of great joy for all people also meant all people groups, Jew and Gentile. When Jesus mentions the good news in 4:18 He reminds them in v. 25 God always had a multi-ethnic family plan of grace beyond Israel:
²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon [Lebanon], to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. ”

The Lord has saving grace for people in Lebanon and Syrians, the gospel to all people is for them, too. People captive to ISIS and false religion, people oppressed around the world we need to remember at Christmas and pray for their deliverance from tyranny to the Prince of Peace who sets captive free. In the genealogy of Jesus in chapter 3 there is Arab blood in His family tree, there's people from Iraq and Syria in the list. Lk 3:38 goes all the way back beyond Abraham, father of many nations to Adam, the father of all nations. Luke as a Gentile wanted to highlight the gospel good news is for *all people*

In Lk 2:1 the Christmas story begins with a census for all the known world. Lk 2:2 mentions Syria. Matthew's gospel mentions wise men from the East who came later to see the newborn King, possibly from the land of Iran. But first in Lk 2:10 the announcement is given of a Savior born for '*all people.*' In v. 14 heavenly hosts don't announce peace for ethnic Israel but '*peace on earth*' (it's for all mankind, those God's favor or grace rests upon). It's peace and joy not based on circumstances, but based on salvation and our relation to the Prince of Peace by faith in Him. Jesus brings joy and peace on earth.

Simeon in v. 29 understood this as he took the baby Jesus in his arms saying
²⁹ *“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of **all peoples** [how did he define all people?] ³² a light for revelation to **the Gentiles**, and for glory to your people Israel. ”*

Simeon understood this baby would bring salvation to all peoples, that's all people groups. This good news brought great joy to this old man before he died and Simeon could rest in peace after seeing Jesus, Savior for all people

Even of the occupying enemy forces, in Lk 7 a Roman centurion comes to faith in Jesus, in fact Jesus said his faith was greater than any in Israel (7:9). In Lk 11 Jesus talked about the OT queen of Arabia in heaven on the last day and OT Arabs of Nineveh who repented at Jonah's preaching. In Lk 14 Jesus extends kingdom invitations to Gentiles while many in Israel rejected (14:22-23). Jesus in Lk 17 healed a foreigner who then truly worshipped and glorified Jesus, and Jesus praised this foreigner for his faith (17:18-19).

Luke's gospel begins with good news for all people, and it ends with Jesus calling us to bring His good news to all people: '*repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations ...*' [Lk 24 ends with this] ⁵² *And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy ...* From beginning to end, like book-ends, the message is 'we bring you good news of great joy that shall be to all people of all nations who repent for the forgiveness of their sins, trusting in Jesus' name (that means all Jesus is and did for sinners in His birth, life, death for sin and resurrection).' Great joy is offered to you and all people in a great Savior who's born, Christ the Lord.

If you don't know Christ as your Lord personally, He's not yet your Savior.

- Come to Christ in haste and faith like the lowly shepherds did in Lk 2
- Come like the soldiers in Lk 3:14 willing to turn from your sinful ways
- Come for deliverance from sin and its consequences like those in Lk 4-6
- Come like the sinful woman falling humbly at the feet of Jesus in Lk 7
- Come begging Jesus for mercy to come to your house like Jairus in Lk 8
- Come denying yourself, taking up your cross to follow Him like in Lk 9
- Come like Mary, not Martha in Lk 10, to sit at the feet of Jesus to listen
- *Don't come like* the Pharisees or self-righteous hypocrites in Lk 11-14, come as a repentant prodigal in Lk 15, admitting your sin, unworthiness to be called a son, but asking forgiveness and if you can be His servant
- Come like the healed leper in Lk 17, worshipping and thanking Jesus
- Come like the publican beating His breast in Lk 18, 'Lord have mercy'
- Come like Zaccheus in the next chapter, eager to see Jesus and to make right all wrongs you've made in the past. Turn from sin, trust the Savior

Zaccheus received Jesus with great joy (19:6) and so can you. Good news isn't just what angels brought, we're to bring it, too, as heralds of the King. We have the same good news to bring today, a Savior born, Christ the Lord. Let's tell everyone we can in these days the gospel's good tidings that are to all peoples, as Simeon said, Jesus the glory of Israel and light of the nations. We exist to spread a passion for the glory of Jesus for the joy of all peoples.

Joy to **the world**, the Lord is come! Let **earth** receive her King
Let **every heart** prepare Him room [how do we do that? Humbly, repentantly]

Come Desire of **Nations**, come! Fix in us Thy humble home
Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies ...
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

I pray the gospel of Luke's story brings great joy to your heart as you reflect on the One born as Savior who is Christ the Lord "for all people," including saving sinners such as us! May His heart "for all people" be shared more by us, for people like above, and for people not like us. May we share this good news of the gospel this Christmas and next year with "all people."