

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 17th March 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin (via video) and Peregrin
Series: Luke: you can be certain
Title: ... that a Saviour was born who is both Messiah and Lord
Passage: Luke 2:1-21
Outline: **The birth**
 The simplicity
 The inn
 The announcement
 Saviour, Messiah, Lord
 The peace
 Does not occur naturally
 We cannot achieve it ourselves
 Is Christ's mission
The reaction

INTRODUCTION

- *“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”*
- You may be forgiven in the light of Christchurch, for being a little cynical about that line from this reading... *‘peace on earth’*... where **is** that peace?
- that line has been SO mis-understood... but I hope we can unpack what it means this morning... /
- It’s true isn’t it, that Australians have less and less of an idea of what we believe and cherish as Christians?
- Yes – our numbers swell at Christmas and Easter... but people are **so** swept up into the **worldly** aspects of the celebrations, they don’t actually have a **clue** what is going on...
- Only this week, Susan explained to someone about **Easter**... they had **no idea** that Good Friday marks Jesus’ **death** and Easter Day his **resurrection**... and Susan explained in the most **simple** terms, that because of Easter, that if we turn from sin, and come into relationship with Jesus, we can exchange all our **badness** for his **goodness**!
- When it comes to Christmas, most people don’t know the difference between a **folk song** and a **Christmas carol**... so you see the carols sung at the Domain from Sydney or the Myer Music bowl... and you can go from singing **Jingle Bells** at one moment to **Hark the Herald** the next and people see no difference and sing the words of **both** without ever stopping to think about **either**!
- And even if they **wanted** to stop and consider it, their time in church is all too **brief** and the kids are pulling at them to get **home** and open **presents** and suddenly its **New Year’s Eve** and **party time again**...
- So let’s take some extended time to consider this well-known Christmas reading from Luke’s Gospel...
- ... and there are **three** aspects to highlight:
 1. **The birth** - vv1-7
 2. **The announcement** – vv6-14
 3. **The reaction** – vv15-21

1. THE BIRTH

- In vv1-2 – Luke reports a census... let’s pick it up at v3 – *and everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.*

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

- I wonder how **well** Mary knew her Old Testament and the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah?
- If she did and had comprehended all that had been told her to this point, she may well have wondered – “according to the prophecies, I’m supposed to be in **Bethlehem** when this baby is born – not **Nazareth!**”
- And then Joseph swings by after work one afternoon and says ‘we have to go up to Bethlehem for the census...’ and Mary just **smiles...** and thinks – yes – **God is at work.**
- God **orchestrating** human plans, so the **prophecy** would be **fulfilled...**
- Note how **simply** Luke tells of the arrival... v6 *While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*
- Well Luke – where **was** she when the waters broke?
- for how **long** was she in labour?
- Did he breathe **straight** away?
- Did he **feed** OK?
- How much did he **weigh**?
- How **long** was he?
- How much **hair** did he have? //
- But we’re told **none** of that...
- Because that’s not where the emphasis lies... //
- ... and this was no **ordinary** birth....
- The focus is not on those **sentimental** things to which we are prone to attach **significance!** //
- Do you **remember** the words of the **carol**?
- *How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given... and **God imparts to human hearts, the blessing of his heaven...***
- *The **hopes and fears of all the years, are met in thee tonight...*** that is what was happening in this birth..
- No fresh word from God for **400 years...**
- **But now** the time has come...
- *She gave birth to her first-born, a son... //*
- We’ve spent the last 2,000 years adding all kinds of cultural and mythological aspects to the story and because of that, made it harder for those who want to get to the heart of the matter to GET to the heart of the matter...
- Take for example the line we used to read – *she laid him in a manger for there was no room for them in the inn...*
- How much has been made of **that** in children’s pageants or Christmas videos?
- We imagine poor Joseph and Mary knocking on the doors of every motel in Jerusalem, even when the ‘no vacancy’ sign was out, until one operator took pity on them and offered them a stable out the back... at least that’s how we usually picture it...
- But the translation we read today is much more **accurate...** there was no room in the **guest room...**

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- That is, Joseph would have had family in Bethlehem that's for sure... and he would have knocked on their door, but because everyone was in town for the census, chances are the guest room – often built up on the roof – was already **taken**.
- But his family wouldn't have turned them away... so they offered them a place in the main room of the house... and yes – at night – when the temperature cooled off, the animals would have been brought in... probably on a lower level.. the family would have been on a raised platform within the room...
- And we are reminded that when God stepped into the world he didn't come to a **princess** in a **palace**... or even the **high priest** in the **temple**... but to a lowly **maiden**... with a **food trough** for a **bed**... and God's **humility** and **graciousness** and **tender mercy** is plain to see from the **beginning**...!
- So let's look secondly:

2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT

- People mostly make announcements about the birth of their baby these days on **social media**... I'm not even sure if they even **have** birth sections in newspapers today...
- But **this** announcement – this was like no other
- Again, in an economy of words, Luke just tells us the facts...
- *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby...*
- Dirty, smelly, shepherds... isolated **socially** and **religiously**... **bottom** of the **social scale**...
- Yet when God dispatches his angelic hosts to announce the coming into the world of his eternal son, it is to the **fields** he sends them – not the **palaces**, not the **parliaments**, not the **Caesars**, not the **high priests**...
- ...but to **shepherds**...
- He didn't come to them because they were **pious** or uniquely **religious**... not because they had a **standing** or **status**... in one sense they had **nothing** going for them at **all**... these fellows on the **night shift** on the **Judean hills**... but sending the angels to the lowly shepherds was completely in line with the **humble circumstances** of eternal Son stepping in to our world from the beginning! /
- when someone **died** in the ancient world... professional **mourners** would gather.
- When a **son** (in particular) was born, **minstrels** would gather to mark the celebration...
- And here, God arranges his **own** celebration... **heavenly** minstrels to **fill** the night sky and give **songs** of **celebration**... what do we read in Hebrews 1? – *when God brings his first born into the world – let all God's angels worship him!!*
- *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.¹¹ Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*
- **Good** news... a **saviour**, the **messiah**, the **Lord**!
- The man who will change the **calendar** and change the **world**!
- In **fulfilment** of God's promises
- Out of **SO** much **love** for the **world**...
- ...so that **whosoever** believes in him will not perish but have eternal life...
- The world **needs** good news doesn't it? //
- It's **crying out** for good news!!
- **49** people murdered in **Christchurch**, planes falling out of the **sky**; a prominent **church** leader sentenced for **sexual abuse**... **chaos** and **corruption** and **self interest** in **governments** around the **world**...

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- Murder on our **streets**...
- Domestic violence taking a **woman** a week...
- **Drought and flood and bushfire**...
- **Ice addiction**... drugs killing **young people** at concerts.... /
- The world needs a **Saviour**... a **Messiah**... //
- The world needs to **return to** and **surrender** and **submit** to the **Lord of Lords!! //**
- Yes this **GOOD NEWS** does bring **GREAT JOY** – to **anyone** and all who would **embrace** it...
- It's the **only** source of joy after these past 48 hours... that Jesus has been sent to **triumph** over **evil** and **defeat** the **evil one //**
- But there is **one** aspect of the announcement I want to zoom in on... that line I **highlighted** at the **start**...
- *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth **peace** to those on whom his favour rests*
- **"Peace on earth"**
- Such a **misunderstood promise**...
- This proclamation does **NOT** mean there's going to be **no more war!**
- Jesus himself tells his disciples – nation will rise against nation – there will be **wars** and **rumours of wars!**
- So the angelic throng was **not** suggesting that as a result of the arrival of the baby in this manger, there was going to be **peace on earth**
- If **that** was the message, we'd have to say Christianity was a downright **failure**... because **2,000** years after the message was announced, there **IS** no peace!!
- We **do** know of course that when Jesus returns there **will** be peace – but not **until then**...
- Nor does it mean some dimension of **personal** or **psychological tranquillity** whereby individuals are removed from life's **disappointments** and **shocks** and **tragedies**...
- Again we'd have to be honest and say that if **that** were the message it was a downright **failure**...
- ...because we still experience **fear**, we still experience **disappointment**, we still experience **pain** and **illness** and **anxiety disorders** and all these other things...
- So how do we make sense of what this peace is all **about?** /
- Just turn back to ch 1 – Zechariah's song... do you see what he said at the end there – vv78 and 79?
- That a **light** will shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death... **to guide our feet into the way of peace**...
- Now **that** was the outcome of v77 – the way of peace comes through the **knowledge** of **salvation** through the **forgiveness** of **sins**... //
- **THIS** is the peace of which the angels sing...
- It is peace **WITH God**... through the **forgiveness** of **sins**...
- **That's** the peace this little baby born in Bethlehem will bring...
- So let's get this right:

Peace with God doesn't exist naturally...!

- When we read the Bible, we discover that while God loves us, yet his **wrath** is revealed from heaven against all the **wickedness** and **ungodliness** of people...

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- There is a divine **hostility** between a **holy God** and **sinful Man**...
- Now we don't think about this often... we don't usually see a sign across people's chests saying 'I am totally hostile to God'.... But that's the **sad reality**... and we see it increasingly on our **media** and in **social media**... we **see** it all the time... and often... **aggressively so**...
- And this hostility can't be fixed by us standing in a **circle** and singing... *all we are saying is give peace a chance*... because actually there **is no** peace...!
- And the **second** thing to point out about peace... is that **peace with God – the end of hostility between us and God –**

can NOT come about as a result of our best endeavours!

- **We can't** make peace with **God!!** //
- Think about this... there is an hostility between the **creator** and the **creature** – entirely of the **creature's making**... and we the creatures **cannot fix!**
- **Religion's** answer is '**try a little harder**'...
- Remember the **Glen Campbell** song? "You got to try a little kindness, yes show a little kindness Just shine your light for everyone to see"
- But in the end... no one can **keep it up**... and some people are just not interested in **trying!**
- In churches all over Australia today... the message from the one out the **front** will be... "come on – we can **do** this... we can **change the world**... we can bring in God's **kingdom** on **earth**... just be **nice**... be **kind**... let's fight for **justice**... if we all pull **together**, we can **change the world**..."
- It's **rubbish!**
- No **wonder** there is so little **joy** in religious congregations... no wonder there is such **decline** in **numbers** in our churches... and so many clergy pulling **out** and giving **up**... because what they're trying to do is **impossible**... There's no **joy** in beating yourself up to try **harder** to **achieve** the **impossible**...! //
- So... this **peace** with God doesn't exist **naturally**, ...this peace with God **cannot** be created by our own **best efforts** – that's the **problem** / – but here's the **solution**:

Christ's mission was to establish this peace.

- how does this **Jesus** in a **manger** make **peace**?
- Well he doesn't make peace in the **manger**.
- He makes peace by his **blood shed** on the **cross!**
- So that if YOU repent and turn back to God, then on the basis of what Jesus has done, you can be forgiven thereby be at peace with God!
- Perhaps you're familiar with this chorus

*There's a way back to God
From the dark paths of sin;
There's a door that is open
And you may go in:
At Calvary's cross
Is where you begin,
When you come as a sinner to Jesus.*

- Let me ask you / – do **you** know that **peace**? Do you **have** that peace?
- You might say 'well Mark, I'm **doing** my **best**'.

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

- ..and if that is your response, you've **missed** the **point**!
- I asked whether you have this **peace**!
- The absolute peace that **floods** your heart when you have the assurance that your **sins** are **forgiven**...
- This is **good news** of **great joy**... **this** is what it is... that a **Saviour** has come... to save us from **sin** and **death**... and make **peace** with God for us, which we could **never** do on our **own**... //

3. THE REACTION

- Well somewhat briefly now...
- What was the **reaction** to this announcement?
- The shepherd's made a decision to go to Bethlehem
- A baby born in and of itself – perhaps no big deal... but v15 – the difference was – **what the Lord had told them about this baby**... note that they figured that to hear from the **angels** was to hear from the **Lord**!
- How did they **find** Jesus...? Asked around perhaps – “have you heard of any baby being born...?” Not just **any** baby we're looking for one wrapped in **cloths** and laying in a **manger**!
- Well by whatever means, they found the baby and I want you to note **two** things the shepherds did after that...
- First.. they **spread** the **word**... not just that they'd seen a beautiful **baby** – nothing too remarkable about that – v17 – they spread the word **concerning what had been told them about this child**...
- They were telling **others**, what the angel had told **them**... **good news of great joy** – a **Saviour**, the **Messiah**, the **Lord**!! //
- When you hear **good news**, you don't need a **training** program to tell **others**...
- Did you **tell** someone you had a good report from the **oncologist**?
- Did you **tell** someone you passed the **exam**?
- did you **tell** someone you're **engaged**?
- Did you **tell** someone you and your child have been **reconciled**?
- Did you **tell** someone you got that **job** or that **promotion**?
- Of **course** you did...! / No one **told** you to **do** it... no one **trained** you in **how** to do it... and that's what we see the shepherds doing... they just did it!!
- What **not** tell someone **good** news of **great joy** – that in **Jesus** we have a **Saviour**... that **sin** can be **forgiven**.. that we can be **sure** of our **eternal future**...!?? That **we** can be at **peace** with **God**?? /
- And the **second** thing the shepherds did?
- V20 - *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.* //
- If you have **no** joy this morning in **Jesus**... if you have no **peace** in your **heart**... if you're not **humbled by** and **grateful for all** that God has done for you in **Jesus**... Then chances are you haven't yet **understood** the gospel!! //
- The **shepherds** told **others** and they **praised God**...
- And when **we** have really **grasped** how **good** the **good news** **is**? ...**we** will tell **others**... and praise **God**...!