

The Proclamation About Christ

Luke 2:8-35

As defined by Webster's dictionary, the word proclamation means an official announcement or an official declaration. In regard to government it could be anything from a declaration of war to the declaration of peace. It could be in reference to a law that has been enacted or the observance of some special day. When its made by Government a proclamation is binding on its citizens or people for whom it is intended.

On January 1, 1863 President Lincoln issued The Emancipation Proclamation. The National Archives and Records Administration provides the following summary:

The proclamation declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

Despite this expansive wording, the Emancipation Proclamation was limited in many ways. It applied only to states that had seceded from the Union, leaving slavery untouched in the loyal border states. It also expressly exempted parts of the Confederacy that had already come under Northern control. Most important, the freedom it promised depended upon Union military victory.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation, it captured the hearts and imagination of millions of Americans and fundamentally transformed the character of the war. After January 1, 1863, every advance of federal troops expanded the domain of freedom. Moreover, the Proclamation announced the acceptance of black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling the liberated to become liberators. By the end of the war, almost 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

From the first days of the Civil War, slaves had acted to secure their own liberty. The Emancipation Proclamation confirmed their insistence that the war for the Union must become a war for freedom. It added moral force to the Union cause and

strengthened the Union both militarily and politically. As a milestone along the road to slavery's final destruction, the Emancipation Proclamation has assumed a place among the great documents of human freedom.

The Declaration of Independence is another powerful document. But there is another proclamation that has absolute and binding power that provides the intended recipient freedom. It is the greatest document proclaiming freedom. This proclamation is not limited in either its scope or its power.

This freedom also depended on the victory of the One fighting for the freedom of others who were enslaved.

It also empowers those liberated to become liberators.

Like the Emancipation Proclamation which insisted that the war of the Union become a war of freedom, this too is a war for freedom.

The proclamation we speak of today was first announced over 2,000 years ago. It was an event that was foretold by various men in various ways centuries before it occurred, but the time for its official announcement had come. As we will see from our passage this proclamation about Christ has four parts.

It was informative

It was intentional

It was inclusive

It was inviting

Turn once again to Luke's account of the birth of Christ in chapter 2 where we will consider the proclamation about Christ. Luke 2:8-35

I. IT WAS INFORMATIVE – v. 11, 14

Two weeks ago we were all overjoyed to hear the news that Krehmelers and Marchs will become new grandparents with the announcement that Luke and Sarah are expecting their first child. Several

weeks earlier was the birth of little Kane. Through Facebook we have watched the Janes firstborn grow along with little Julene Discoe born to Alan and Alyssa. This past week a little bundle was added to the Woods' clan. In spite of the complications that hastened his arrival 7 weeks early, it is still a joyous occasion. The announcement of a birth is a jubilant time. News quickly spreads and people join others congratulating the new parents. Spirits are encouraged and for a time all the cares of the world seem to ebb away. News of a birth brings great joy.

The news of what occurred on the night Jesus was born was first of all informative. The first piece of information we are given about this child is that the news is good news. For it to be good news we have to know who sent it. Verse 14 tells us that an angelic host resonated praise to God. It was from Him that this good news originated. John 3:16 tells us that God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son. That verse also tells us that the good news doesn't end with just the coming of His Son, but is actually experienced when we believe in Him resulting in eternal life. This good news has come.

Song – He Made A Way in a Manger

Longing for a Savior
A hopeless world would wait
Sin demanded justice
At a price we could not pay;
But God displayed his mercy
The greatest gift of love
When we could not reach heaven
Heaven came to us. Chorus:

*He made a way in a manger
A way through the Son
Messiah the promised
Before time had begun;
For God so loved this world
Though he knew what love would cost
He made a way in a manger
To make a way to the cross*

In Bethlehem a stable
Became a throne of grace
As God himself our Savior
Drew near to take our place
His mother smiled in wonder
As shepherds stood in awe
The sacrifice of heaven
Lay sleeping in the straw

He is the life that died our death
The precious Lord Jesus
Laid down his sweet head

He made a way in a manger
Away in a manger
no crib for his bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay

The term good news is the same word translated elsewhere gospel. It is that gospel of which Paul says he was not ashamed. There is no greater news than the gospel of Jesus Christ. It isn't that you won some super lottery. It isn't that your candidate won the election. It's greater news than passing an exam or graduating college. It has more significance than getting a great promotion or a huge raise or bonus or that your team won the Super Bowl. This good news has eternal implications. The gospel is good news for those who believe it and receive it. In the New Testament the gospel denotes the good news about the Kingdom of God and of salvation through Christ. The good news is the salvation message.

The root word for gospel can also be translated evangel or evangelize. The angel became the first evangelist to proclaim the good news of the Savior. The angel pointed to the Savior. The angel pulled back the curtain and stepped into our realm and to our planet to deliver the good news. It would not have been good news had the angel elected to keep it to himself. Good news is willingly shared.

What the angel had to say was not only good news it was also of great joy. The good news he had to share was reason to celebrate. Our world is filled with enough bad news. We don't need to look very far to find bad news.

When he was confronted by the foreboding news of his own demise if he did not change his ways, Ebenezer Scrooge asked the ghost of Jacob Marley to speak comfort to him.

There is so much bad news a little good news is welcome.

Falling gas prices is good news.

Finding work is good news.

Getting a clean bill of health is good news.

Passing a difficult class is good news.

We can find joy and celebrate over such news, but what the angel had to say would bring great joy. So just who was this good news of great joy for?

We find the answer in verse 10. This proclamation has significance for you and me. It tells us that this good news of great joy was to be for all people.

This news was not just for the shepherds who were the selected audience of this angelic visitor.

This news was not just for the people of Bethlehem where this child was born.

This news was not just for the people of Israel.

This news was not just for people living at that time.

This news was for all people. This news was the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that through his family lineage all the nations of the world would be blessed. The news proclaimed by the angel would bless all nations.

This news is for you and me and your family.

It is for your neighbor and co-worker.

It is for the hardened criminal.

It is for every race, male and female, boy and girl.

It is for anyone and everyone.

So what news could bring such great joy?

Verse 11 "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ, the Lord."

The shepherds were informed that the Savior had been born that night. This proclamation implies that there was something or someone needing saving and something or someone worth saving. That we need saving is bad news because it implies that we are in trouble, that we have done something wrong. The Bible describes it as sin. We are all affected by it. But it is good news that a Savior has been born, because it means something has been done for us regarding the sin we have. Every person is redeemable. No one is beyond the hope of salvation. Savior is a word that means deliverer and He had been born the night of the angelic visit.

Charles Ryrie writes "Without the Incarnation we would have no Savior. Sin requires death for its payment. God does not die. So the Savior must be human in order to be able to die. But the death of an ordinary man would not pay for sin eternally, so the Savior must also be God. We must have a God-man Savior, and we do in our Lord."

So the angel proclaimed that this child born was the Savior, the deliverer. He would not deliver us from ruthless oppression, from physical abnormalities or financial difficulties. He can do those things. He did do those things. Instead He came to deliver us from a far greater oppressor, a far greater doom. He came to deliver us from sin, its penalty, its punishment and its curse. That is indeed good news. That indeed brings great joy.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.

The Savior has been born.

That the Savior has come is good news. This good news of salvation is through Christ, to be received by faith, on the basis of His substitutionary death, His burial, His resurrection, and His ascension.

That these hadn't happened yet to this newborn in no way diminishes His being the Savior. He did not become the Savior at His death. The angel announced that He was the Savior at His birth, but it was through His death and resurrection that He procured the salvation He came to offer mankind.

This was no ordinary baby. No other baby born on that night or any other night before then or since then will ever be introduced in such a way.

When David was born, the doctor holding him in her arms looked at Robyn and me and said "you have a little man-cub." That was the announcement to us about this little person born February 7, 2005.

We might look at a newborn child and wonder at what he or she might become when they grow up. We might look at their sturdy little frame or the way they belt out a cry and wonder if they will be a gifted athlete or a remarkable soloist. We wonder if their nimble fingers will turn out to be a talented pianist. We can wonder about so many things but remain in the dark about who they are or what they will do until they grow up, but not the Christ child. By this proclamation we know right away who He is – He is the Savior.

Not only did the angel proclaim that the child born that night was good news, news that would bring great joy, but the proclamation about Him by the angel revealed that He was the Savior, the long awaited Messiah. Without mentioning Him by name, He is the One Isaiah and Micah wrote about surrounding the details of His birth.

Isaiah 7:14 – spoke of His virgin birth

Micah 5:2 – spoke of His birth place

We are informed that the news was good.

We are informed that the news would bring great joy.

We are informed that the news was for all people.

We are informed that the good news of great joy is about the birth of the Savior, the Christ. The shepherds would understand it to mean the Messiah.

Come Thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free.
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

It was informative.

It was intentional.

II. IT WAS INTENTIONAL – v. 17

What do you do with such good news?

We read that they went and found the child just as the angel had told them. My guess is that even with the town of Bethlehem swelling with visitors who had arrived for the census, not many babies would have been born that night. Such news would have been spread rapidly even in an era without cell phones and computers, especially since a child had been born in a stable, which would have been a more public setting.

What they witnessed confirmed the words of the angel. These shepherds became enthusiastic evangelists. It was good news of great joy for all people. Our text tells us that after leaving the stable they went and spread the news abroad. They made it known. It's a word that means to take in knowledge, to come to know, to recognize, understand or understand completely. People needed to know and their witness was intentional.

Warren Wiersbe states "These shepherds are good examples for us to imitate today. They received by faith the message God sent them and then responded with immediate obedience." Then they went and reported the good news to others.

How many of them believed the shepherds? We don't know.

How many of them went to see for themselves? We don't know that either.

All we know is that the shepherds believed the testimony of the angel, went to see and then responded by telling others.

The natural response of receiving such good news is to share it with others. For those of us who can remember being in school, what is the first thing we want to share when we return after Christmas break? We want to tell others what we got for Christmas. We're excited about it.

We ought to be excited about Jesus. Does the moral state of our world compel us to proclaim the news of a Savior more urgently?

Since my Mom passed away 4 ½ years ago I have taken up her mantle to write to who would be my second cousin. He was raised without any religious background and in college studied philosophy and came away following the teachings of Buddhism. He recently wrote to me about how moved he was by Mom's faith during her illness, that it was so comforting to her and then recalled sitting in the living room of my grandparents talking. He recalled how she would share her faith but not judge him for his lack of faith. We continue to write and I continue to share snippets of the gospel so that one day he will come to know the truth of salvation and his need of a Savior.

Christmas is an especially wonderful time to share the news of the Savior.

In a newsletter we received this past week from Andrew Semenchuk he reflected on a Christmas in Canada when he was 8 years old. Their one-room school house was jammed with eager children and doting parents waiting in anticipation of the school Christmas program. He recounted how they sang carols and acted out the Christmas story. He said it sounded more like a church service than a school house, but then back in those days that was

acceptable. He spoke about the changes that have occurred over the years. Technology has certainly been significant, but then he said that with the changes there has also been more tragedy. Political, social, and moral changes have taken place throughout our country and in the world. He remarks that even much of Europe who was once "Christian" or at least protestant is now pagan, needing evangelism.

He wrote in his letter: "However, I am not discouraged. The Lord promised that 'the gates of hell will not prevail against His church.' We are on the winning side, dear brother and sister! In spite of persecution and suffering, the evangelical churches are growing amazingly in countries we used to call 'the mission fields.' Ukraine, now the 'Bible Belt of Europe,' is a powerful example of this.

"I am so blessed that the Lord is enabling me to continue in this work that I love. Serving the Lord and His church is such a special privilege and you, my dear friend and co-laborer, have been faithful in making this possible. Please accept my loving and sincere gratitude."

He remains as enthusiastic and intentional as the shepherds were 2,000 years ago proclaiming the Savior's birth. The world will not know of the meaning of Christmas or the coming of the Christ unless we go out and proclaim this truth to a needy world.

In a Christmas letter dictated just a few days before his death, Dr. John R. Rice said, "I want no Christmas without a burden for lost souls, a message for sinners, a heart to bring in the lost sheep so dear to the Shepherd, the sinning souls for whom Christ died. May food be tasteless, and music a discord, and Christmas a farce if I forget the dying millions to whom I am debtor; if this fire in my bones does not still flame! Not till I die or not till Jesus comes, will I ever be eased of this burden, these tears, this toil to save souls."

Every day is a good day to share the news of the Christ, but there is no more appropriate time than Christmas to share the gospel. Let's be intentional. Like the angel, like the shepherds it is our responsibility, our privilege, our joy to proclaim the good news.

Romans 10:11-17

In spite of our efforts many will ignore or reject the news. That they will respond in such a way should not silence the message of good news nor should it extinguish our enthusiasm. If it is good news of great joy to us, it will be good news of great joy to those who likewise will receive it as we have. God meant for everyone to hear and share the good news

Vance Havner once said, "The Gospel is not a secret to be hoarded but a story to be announced. Too many Christians are stuffing themselves with Gospel blessings, while millions have never had a taste. How can we be as happy as we ought to be this season and know of them that are unhappy, hungry, ignorant of the word of God, those that are lost and dying and going to Hell."

The shepherds were intentional in their telling the good news to others and so should we.

It was informative.

It was intentional.

In was inclusive.

III. IT WAS INCLUSIVE – v. 32

We have already touched on this earlier in the announcement of the angel, but it bears repeating. Simeon a very devout and righteous man had been waiting for the consolation of Israel. It's a word that means comfort.

Simeon prophesied that this child would be the fall and rise of many in Israel. By this he meant that to many, Christ would be a stumbling block. He would be the chief cornerstone that many would reject.

John 3:19 "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

Romans 9:33 "As it is written, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense; and whosoever believes in Him will not be ashamed.'"

The cross was considered a curse, so many Jews rejected Jesus because that is how He died. Many today still stumble over Him and are content to remain in darkness rather than receive the light. But when Jesus was born, the Light broke the power of darkness forever because darkness cannot overcome the Light. John wrote "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not understand it." (John 1:4-5)

Simeon also said that many will rise on account of Jesus. Those who believe in Him as Savior will be raised up.

Ephesians 2:6 "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You cannot be any more inclusive than that. Yet while it is inclusive it is also exclusive. There is only one way to have eternal life and it is through Jesus Christ.

This year's National Toy Hall of Fame selected the Little Green Army Men, Bubbles and the Rubik's Cube as inductees. Erno Rubik was a 29 year old interior design instructor living with his parents in Budapest when he accidentally created the famous toy. He was trying to demonstrate abstract properties of shape to students in his Form Studies class and did so by strapping together rubber bands, paper clips and wooden blocks. He discovered it was also a puzzle. Initially rejected by many toy companies, Ideal Toy took a risk and it became a global phenomenon. To date, the world record is held by a Dutch teenager who righted all six sides in

5.55 seconds. Rubik had no idea that he was creating a puzzle with just one correct combination and 43 quintillion wrong options. That's 43 followed by 18 zeros.

When Jesus said He was the Way, the Truth and the Life, He was saying He was the only correct answer among countless other options.

The proclamation of the angel and of the shepherds and of Simeon is that there is only one Savior – He is Christ the Lord, but anyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. That leads to our final point. The good news was inviting.

IV. IT WAS INVITING – v. 38

Anna joyously shared the good news of the Savior to all who were looking forward to the Redemption of Israel. It wasn't in a political scheme or a social revolution. It wasn't in reason or even chance. It was in a child, Jesus, born to a virgin. There were those like Anna, who also looked forward to the coming Messiah. Would they believe that the Savior was wrapped up in the person of a newborn? Many look, many are invited, but miss seeing the Savior in the person of Christ. He isn't quite what they expected. While He is a Savior for all, He is not the Savior to all.

Many have once again this Christmas season be presented with an invitation to follow the Savior, the one born over 2,000 years – He is Christ the Lord.

In this coming year let us be challenged to boldly proclaim Christ. That is the work we have been called to. Let's be clear in our message and clear about our mission.

It must be informative

It must be intentional

It must be inclusive

It must be inviting