

## **BORN TO SAVE – LUKE 2:1-20**

**PASTOR COLIN RIEKE ~ CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25, 2013**

**“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his 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. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to 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 Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” 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 were amazed at 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.”**



This is the day our Lord and Savior is born,

I want to ask you what might seem like an odd question. Are you afraid of Christmas? Are you afraid of Christmas? I don’t mean are you afraid of opening up your credit card statement and finding more charges than you can pay for. I don’t mean are you afraid your kids aren’t going to like their presents. And I don’t mean are you afraid that you won’t get along with your in-laws at the Christmas dinner this afternoon. I mean, are you afraid of Christmas – Jesus being born in a manger, angel hosts proclaiming his birth, the whole deal?

Fear isn’t normally an emotion which we associate with Christmas, and yet we see it surrounding the first Christmas – fear by Joseph and Mary when it was announced to them, fear by the shepherds when an angel appeared on the night of his birth. Were they just startled by the

angel, or was it something else? To answer that, let's take a look at some of the things that make us afraid. Fear is something that we have all experienced at one time or another – maybe it's a fear of the dark, maybe it's a fear of disappointing your loved ones, maybe it's your own fear of failure. Whatever fears you might have had or still have really all find their root in expectations, and not meeting expectations – expectations of family, expectations of work, expectations of ourselves.

But instead of focusing on these expectations, I want to focus on a different expectation, it's about why you're even here in the first place. It's about God's expectation. In the beginning, when God was creating the world he said, **"Let us create man in our own image."** Besides the whole biology 101 lesson, it was God who made you who you are. God made you to be like him – perfect and holy. That is the expectation he has for you. Think about that for high expectations. You were born to be perfect, a holy companion to God.

But that didn't last long, did it? If you go back to the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, you see how short lived our image of God lasted. It lasted all of one generation. Then Adam and Eve disobeyed God, fell short of his expectations, and hid out of fear when God came walking in the garden. By disobeying God's command, they ruined their perfection and ability to serve God, they didn't live up to God's expectation. And we don't have to look too far in our lives to see that inherited failure also. God made us to be perfect, he made us to be with him, and even today, on a wonderful day such as Christmas, we see how imperfect we are. I don't think I would describe my preparations for Christmas as being "perfectly holy." And when we are not holy, we don't live up to our purpose, our expectation. And that's on a good day. Then there are all those other days and other times where we go completely contrary to God's will and God's plan. This is the real reason why we should be afraid.

Maybe we try and downplay our fear by lowering our own expectations or acting unafraid. But that doesn't work with God. We need only look as far as the shepherds that first Christmas Eve – they were afraid when the angel first came. Now say for instance you meet someone at the airport, the bus stop, the waiting room of a doctor's office and you strike up a conversation about the economy. After you are talking for a little while you glance at the *Forbes* magazine he is holding and see his face on the cover. And then you realize you've been talking to one of the smartest minds on economic theory and strategy. I can imagine you might get a little bit scared, "did I say something completely stupid?" "what does he think about me?" When you are confronted by someone who clearly knows more about the subject matter than you, suddenly you feel inadequate, you know he could see through your shortcomings.

And I suspect this is what happened to the shepherds. They found themselves in the presence of holiness, something they may have tried hard to be, but when confronted with someone who is holy, they are proven woefully inadequate. And so it doesn't matter how good we look before other people, compared to other people, the only thing that matters is how we measure up to God. We can look so good, until we compare ourselves to God's standard of holiness.

Which is why you can understand the angel's first words to the shepherds, **"Do not be afraid! Behold! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people...A Savior**

**has been born to you, he is Christ, (the Messiah) the Lord.** (God himself)” That’s why Christmas is such a big deal. It’s a big deal because it is the birth of God’s Son. The maker and preserver of the universe came down to earth and took on flesh. The one who is all powerful became a powerless infant. God became man. That is truly amazing! But *why* he came is even more amazing! I received a Christmas card last year which summarized it pretty well. It went something like this, “God didn’t send an economist to save the economy, He didn’t send a doctor to cure cancer, he didn’t send a humanitarian to feed the hungry, he sent a Savior to save the world.”

This Savior was not born in a palace but a stable. He was not born with much fanfare. It simply happened. The gospel writer Luke records the event. God worked out the events surrounding Jesus’ birth to fulfill all the prophecies, or promises he gave in the Old Testament. It is not a “once upon a time” story that is nice to tell at this time of year, “**it happened,**” verified by places and people. He was born to save!

This is the reason the angel chorus sang out, “**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.**” God’s Son was born to save. He didn’t look like much lying there in a manger, but he was what we were not – perfect and holy. He accomplished what we could not – fulfill God’s expectation. He made us what we are not – perfect and holy in God’s sight. This is the peace which the angels spoke about, a peace on earth, a peace between God and man.

And when the angels went back into heaven, what did the shepherds do? Did they just remain watching their flocks at night? No, of course not! They hurried and searched for the sign the angel had told them to look for, “**You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.**” And they found it just as the angel had said. And then they went out from there “**spreading the word concerning what had been told them about this child.**” What better reason to tell others than a Savior has been born. This is a message we can take out today, tomorrow, and every day.

It is a message of which we don’t have to be afraid. Our fear has been taken away. We were born to be perfect, but we aren’t. So Christmas happened. We don’t have to be afraid because even though we were born to be perfect, Jesus was born to save. And that’s a birth worth celebrating. God’s love at Christmas changed your whole life. You are now born to live, because this child was born to save us. Merry Christmas! Amen!