



Message Transcript

Christmas Eve 2022

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

It's wonderful to gather into the house of the Lord on Christmas Eve and have services, and celebrate his great name and worship him. This is the second time I've gotten to do it today. It's been an incredible time. And to hear a very familiar story in Luke Chapter Two. By show of hands, how many have heard that story before? I mean here it is. The shepherds in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night. I mean, they're just ordinary guys. I mean they're known as the village idiot, so to speak. And here they are and they gather together.

But this night's going to be different. It's going to be unlike any other because an angel of the Lord is going to appear and the glory of the Lord's going to show around them. And they're going to be absolutely terrified. The angel, this messenger, is going to speak to them, give them the word that the son of God has been born in Bethlehem, and then they're going to hurry off and go see this one that the angels talked about. And they're going to realize that every single thing that the angel has told them is exactly true in the same way. And they're going to respond with such incredible delight that they're not going to be able to keep it to themselves. They're going to go from there and begin to tell others.

But as I read this story, and as I read anything in the word of God, that story is not just for the shepherds that were out in their fields, but that story has significance for me and you. Because every time that the word of God is read, every time that the word of God is faithfully proclaimed, every time the word of God is studied, that it is

God who is speaking to us. That night, God chose a messenger, an angel, an angelic being that left and departed heaven and came down and talked to a group of shepherds.

But here's what I want to talk to you about tonight, this Christmas Eve. How do you respond when you hear the voice of the Lord? Well, what do you do when you hear the voice of the Lord? I want to give you three things that you can do every time that you hear God's voice. And the first one is this; do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. It's interesting that in this story, and in pretty much every story in the Bible where an angel shows up, one of the first words out of the mouth of that angel is, Do not fear or do not be afraid. Now, that's interesting. There's myriads of angels all around the throne of God. One gets dispensed to give this specific message to some shepherds in Bethlehem on the night that Jesus was born. And the first thing the angel needs to say when the angel shows up after leaving the throne of God is don't be afraid.

Why? Because even the angels that worship around the throne of God are terrifying. When Mary sees an angel, the angel comes to her and said, Do not fear. Even though you haven't been with a man, you're going to give birth to the savior of the world. Even when Joseph is told to take Mary as his wife, even though he knows that she's pregnant and he's not the father, an angel shows up and says, Do not fear. Why? Because we shouldn't fear when we hear the word of the Lord.

Oftentimes when we talk about the Bible or we talk about things going on in church, there's a fear factor that goes off. And I know it's true for many of you that are here today. For some of you, you've been looking forward to Christmas Eve services

for a while, you've been inviting your friends. Some of you are the friends that they invited, and you don't want to be here. And I know that. I see the tracks and skid marks and snow out there. I don't really want to come in here. But what happens is when we get into a church service like this and the word of God is open and the story is told, fear can go off in our heart. We won't tell people that we're afraid. We won't tell people that we're scared to hear this; we won't tell people things like that. We'll say, Well, we're just not that interested.

And fear gets masked. And so we come in and every time we hear the word of Lord, we're really terrified deep down, because maybe there is truth to this and maybe I do need to hear it, but I'm just not ready for it. So we put up all sorts of guards all around us because deep down inside we're fearful. And people may just think we're quiet, but there's a lot more going on on the inside.

It reminds me of the story of the couple that had been married for 60 years and the husband was known as a super godly man. He always was affirming of his wife. He never said anything to her, was never short with her, never impatient with her. And in a Sunday school class one Sunday, some of the younger men in the church said, Hey, what is your secret? How come it is you are so godly, you're always so quiet around her. That means you let her lead, you let her do all these things. And he said, Well, the day we got married, we left the church in a horse and buggy. And when we were leaving and we were going, the horse stopped and my wife said, I'll take care of this. And she got out of the car and went up to the horse and she looked the horse in the eye and said, That's one. And then she came back and sat down by me.

Well sure enough, as we continued on, the horse stopped again about a half mile down the road. She said, I got this. She got out, went up to the horse and she said, That's two. Well, as we went on, we went about another mile and the horse stopped for the third time. She's like, I've got this. And she went out, walked in front right by the horse, pulled out a revolver and shot the horse dead. She felt a lot like we're feeling right now. I mean, the guy was saying this and she got back into the carriage and he looked at her, he said, Honey, you can't do that to a horse that's innocent. And she looked at me and said, That's one.

So sometimes we're silent when we're really fearful on the inside. Here's the reality. The angel said, Do not be afraid. Why? For I bring you good news of a great joy for all the people. Front of you is born this day in the city of David is Savior, who is Christ the Lord. The reason you don't need to be afraid is because this message was not only for the shepherds, this message is for every single human being on the planet that's ever been born. God loves humanity. More importantly and personally, God loves you. God loves you. Don't be afraid of the message of the Bible. The whole message of the Bible is God's love for humankind. The Bible says in John 3:16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believed in him would not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that, the world might be saved through him. What is God's heart for the world? God loves the world. See, I have people ask questions all the time. What would God think if

he came to the world? I mean, what would he think of this place? He's already been and he's coming back. And when you study the life of Jesus Christ, who you're studying is God in flesh and who he is. So we got to ask the question, If I'm not to be afraid because it's good news, well what's good news? Good news are those things that are so good you just can't keep them inside. When it comes to athletics, for those of you that are hockey fans, when the Avs won the Stanley Cup last year, you were excited you didn't keep it inside. When the Broncos won Super Bowl 50, over a million people gathered downtown to celebrate the good news of the victory that they had.

When people get engaged or somebody's going to have their first child, there's good news; we don't keep it inside. The Bible is good news of great joy for who? For all people. You know who that means it's for? It's for you. You may have thought you were just being dragged by family or friends. You may have shown up here accidentally, you thought, but I got news for you. God wanted you to be here today because he wanted you to know that he has a great love for you, and he always has. The Bible says that he's the one that created you in your mother's womb, that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. He made no one else like you. In the same way there's no two snowflakes that are alike or no two fingerprints that are alike, there's no two human beings that are exactly alike. He made you just the way you are and He loves you. Do not be afraid. It's good news. That's what the angel tells us. It's good news of great joy that shall be to all the people.

Well, what's the second way we should respond? If I'm going to respond, I don't want to be afraid. What do I need to respond like? Second is this, believe the

message. Believe the message. Believe the truth that's being dispensed. And the truth that's being dispensed is that the Lord saves, that Jesus Christ is Lord. You say, Well, that doesn't sound like that good of news because I didn't know that I needed a savior. Well you do. That's what the Bible points out from start to finish. See, the Bible tells us this, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Sin is not just that you've done bad things.

Sin is the fact that you are a bad thing that has had symptoms of doing bad things. And the reason that you have that DNA is that you caught it from your parents who caught it from their parents, who caught it from their parents. Because ever since Adam and Eve were in the garden, when God created a perfect world with mankind where there was no sin, and God gave them instructions and said, Choose whatever you want, do whatever you want to do. It's all good. Any choice you make is good. Although there's one I don't want you to do. Don't eat off the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The day you eat off that tree, you will die. And they made it about six verses in our Bible. They're like, Well, why can't I eat it? And why can't I do this? And I want to be like God and I want to be able to decide. And they ate the fruit and sin in the world. And your G-rated version of conception, sinner A and sinner B conceive and you get sinlings, and you're part of that group.

That's why for those of you that are getting ready and you have your first child and you think, Man, this child is marvelous. There's no child like this. This child's beautiful, this child's smarter than any other child, and this child's wonderful. Until you get them home and you think this child is so selfish and self-centered and all they think

about is their own needs and what they want. Why? Because they have the virus. You said, Well that doesn't seem like that big of a deal. Well it is, because the wages of sin is death.

See, what you earned for that sin is death. And even if you said, Well I didn't mean to be born this way. Nobody asked me to be born. God created you in such a way and you have a track record that demonstrates that you've sinned in all sorts of different ways. I mean, look around the room. Every single person that you see is a sinner. Every single person has a resume of sin. And here's the result of the sin, you will die. It's a guarantee. Religious people die. Irreligious people die. Men die. Women die. Boys die. Girls die. We don't get to pick the date of our death, but the fact is we're going to die. Well why? Because sin entered the world. God never intended it to be that way. That's why if you've ever gone to a funeral, and I've officiated many, it's always a perversion as to what God intended. God created human beings to be in relationship with Him. We're the ones that went the other way.

So then what's the message? Well, God had a plan to rescue us. God had a plan to take care of our sin. Sin had a punishment. The punishment is death. The only one that could pay the punishment would be God himself. So God sent His son to be the savior of the world. So what the angel is announcing to the shepherds is the long awaited Messiah, the one that's willing to forgive all your sins, he's just been born. The king came, he's in a manger. You'll find him wrapped in swaddling clothes. Go see it for yourself.

And there's such a buzz in heaven on that night that even after the angel gives the message, it's almost as if you hear myriads or millions of angels saying, God, we want to go tell them too. We want to praise you for being willing to save the human race. And so myriads of angels show up glorifying and praising God and saying peace to those that he is pleased with. How many you could use a little more peace in your life? I'm not talking about a change of circumstances. I'm talking about that deep inner peace that no matter what you're going through, you know this: that this life is temporary. The next life is forever. Believe the message, believe the message. It's important that you do because the Bible says that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. And so often I know that when people come into church, especially on a Christmas Eve service, it's this, Hey, keep it upbeat, keep it fresh, make the music good. Tell us what we want to hear and send us home.

I know that's true, but I think that would be spiritual malpractice on my part to do that. I mean, what kind of doctor do you want to go to? Do you want to go to a doctor that diagnosis you with cancer but is such a nice doctor that he would never tell you? That he would look you in the eye and he would say, Listen, everything looks good from here, all the best. Knowing that you're going to die in two months? Or would you rather go to the doctor that says, I love you enough to tell you that you've been diagnosed with cancer. And it looks bleak, but there are some things that we can do, and I'd like to start being very aggressive for that treatment. Who would you want to go see? I'd want to go see the latter. And so would you.

What kind of pastor do you want? You want somebody that's going to tickle your

ears and tell you, Hey, you're all going to heaven, don't worry about it. When you're not? When there are a lot of people in this room that are already dead in their transgressions and sins, you say, Well, how do I know whether I'm dead or not? Here's how. I'll ask you this. If you died today, would you go to heaven? Most people would say, Well of course. Let me ask you this. Why? Why would you go? Most people would say this, Because I'm a pretty good person. To which I would ask, Compared to who? Your friends? I'm a pretty good person compared to them too. If you ever compared yourself to the perfect eternal living God of the universe, you'll come up really short.

Some people think that, well I'm, I'm really religious. I've gone to church my whole life. I've always been a Christian. No you're not. You were born dead in your sins and you're, the Bible teaches us that if we die in our sins, our sins will drag us to an eternal hell separated from God. Hell's not a place that bad people go and hang out together. Hell is a place where people go individually, where it is outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. It's where everybody who is born is on their way to, until they recognize they have a need for the Lord to save them. And they desire to turn from their sin and by faith place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So here's the deal. If you're born on your way to hell, here's my question. When did you turn and trust Christ? Well, I've just kind of always believed. No you haven't. You've always lived for yourself. When did you turn and trust Christ? When did the Holy Spirit come into your life? When did you acknowledge that Jesus coming to the earth

wasn't just for the shepherds, Jesus coming to earth was for you? See, the message is this, that God so loved the world that he sent Jesus for you. The message is this, that God made him who had no sin to become sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. You see that baby in a manger is the king of kings and the Lord of Lords, the one who created the entire universe. That baby in the manger is the one who's going to fulfill the law. That baby in a manger's the one who's going to grow into a man who's going to heal and deliver people from their sin.

He's going to fix the way the world needs to go. He's going to go to the cross, even though he's going to ask his dad, If there's any other way, I'll do it. But not my will, your will be done. And as he goes to the cross and gets nails put in his hand and in his feet and breathes His last and dies; it's the most tragic story in human history. Why? Because Jesus wasn't born like we were born. He didn't have a father like we had. He had his father God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He wasn't conceived in sin. When he came into the world. He's fully man, but he's always been fully God. And so the only way that Jesus could die would be to give up his life on a cross.

You know intuitively you're going to die. You just don't know when. Could be today, could be 60 years from now, we don't know. But Jesus would've never died. He's God. He gave up his life. He was willing to deal with insults and abuse and hatred and all those things. Why? Because he had a love for you. And even if you would've been the only person on the planet, he would've come and died for you. He laid down his life for you.

So you don't need to be afraid of this message, because it's really good news.

Because when you believe in Jesus, it secures your relationship with God now for all eternity. Because Jesus said this, I am the way, the truth in the life. And no one comes to the Father except through me. Pastor Jeff, are you saying that Jesus is the only way to be saved? 100% yes. 100% yes. Well, what about other religions out there? I'm not talking about religions. I'm talking about the Godman Jesus Christ. And apart from him, there is no salvation. There is no other name under heaven given under men by which we must be saved. Amen.

But see, here's the good news. Romans 5:8 says, But while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God doesn't wait until you get everything right. God doesn't wait until you put everything together. God doesn't wait until you can show them what a good person you are now. God goes after those who are lost. God takes those who are messed up. God takes those who don't think they're messed up, who are super prideful, which means they're more messed up than anybody thinking that they're not messed up. He goes after prideful, he goes after broken. He goes after everybody to let them know, I came for you. And even if you never respond to me by faith, and even if you never repent of your sin, know this. I love you. I just can't be with you until you turn from your sin and turn to me.

So if you're called to not be afraid and you're called to believe the message, then what's the third thing you need to do when you hear the word of God? Here's what I would say. Respond immediately. Your eternity is counting on it. Respond immediately. I mean, when you hear that God's willing to save you and you're convicted of that, respond to him. You say, Well, how do I know that I'm hearing God? Because the

Bible says the Holy Spirit comes to bring conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. For some of you that are here today, many of you that are here today, you know that if you died in your sin and you met the Lord face-to-face, you would hear these words, Depart from me worker of iniquity, I never knew you. We never had a relationship. You can't enter my kingdom.

Some of you are convicted tonight that Jesus is righteous and you're not. And some of you are being convicted tonight, that judgment is coming. And make no mistake about it, Jesus Christ is coming back and he will judge both the living and the dead. Here's the question, are you ready for him? Do you have a relationship with the eternal God? And see, Jesus when he came, everything he did, he did publicly. Did you know that? When he left heaven, he left heaven publicly and came as a baby in a manger. He grew up publicly. He called his disciples publicly. He healed publicly, he preached publicly. He delivered demons publicly. He raised people from the dead publicly. He went to the cross and was shamed and beaten publicly. He died publicly. He rose from the dead publicly. And guess what? He's coming back to this planet publicly. You can bank on it. Amen.

So when God knows that he loves you, here's what he says in his word. Anyone who's ashamed of me and my words, I'll be ashamed to him when I come too. Tonight, I'm going to give you the opportunity to respond to him. I'm going to give you the opportunity to respond to him just simply by standing to your feet. Because the Bible says this, If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, and we believe in our hearts

God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. So here's my question. When were you saved? When were you rescued? When were you delivered? So I don't have a story like that. I don't go to a church like this. I'm not asking you to join our church. I'm telling you, if you've never been rescued or delivered, you are not saved. And if you are to die in your sin, you would be apart from God forever. And that was never his intention because he loves you so much.

So in a minute I'm going to give you the opportunity to stand to your feet. We'll recite back together just a statement, says something like this. Today, I publicly confess Jesus Christ is my personal Lord and Savior. You say, well, Why would you have me stand? Because if Jesus called you publicly, why wouldn't you respond publicly? And here's the deal. If you won't stand for Christ in a church, I promise you, you won't stand for Him out in the world. We had 100 stand at the last service. I'm not asking you, are you religious? I'm not asking you, do you go to church? I'm not asking you if you're a good person. I'm not asking what you've done to make people think you're good. I'm asking you if you've heard the Lord speak to your heart, and you know you've never responded by faith and you want Jesus to be the Lord of your life, that's who I'm inviting to stand. And when you stand, here's what the Bible says. There's more rejoicing over one sinner that repents than over 99 that don't need to.

And even if you were the only person here and you stood, there will be myriads; all those angels will be rejoicing the same way, knowing that you are written with your name in the lamb's book of life.

Do you want the gift? I'm offering you a gift that God's been wanting you to have

from the moment that you were conceived. He wants you to be saved. He wants to be in relationship with you. So whether you're here in Inglewood, whether you're in Westminster, or if you're watching online, I'm just going to invite you right now where you're standing. If you want to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, would you stand to your feet right now please? And we will worship the Lord as you do. Thank you.

Speaker 2:

Thank you.

Pastor Jeff:

Praise the Lord. I'm going to ask you to stay standing. Stay standing. And if you're sitting there saying, I should have stood, I should have stood. Stand now. Stand now. It's God talking to you saying, Hey, do you hear my voice? Do you hear me?

Speaker 2:

Amen. Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Here's what I'd like us to do. I'd like us to read this on the screen behind me. I'll say it out loud. You can repeat after me. If you're seated, you can pray this prayer too. But let's do this out loud and loudly. Let's do it because we want this in our lives. Would you pray this with me or speak it out loud with me today? Let's do it loudly, all right.

Today.

Congregation:

Today.

Pastor Jeff:

I publicly confess.

Congregation:

I publicly confess.

Pastor Jeff:

Jesus Christ.

Congregation:

Jesus Christ.

Pastor Jeff:

As my personal...

Congregation:

As my personal...

Pastor Jeff:

... Lord and Savior.

Congregation:

... Lord and savior.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen and amen. Can we give God praise for what he is done in this place tonight? Amen.

You may be seated. I want to tell you, for those of you that stood to your feet tonight, that your life has changed and you won't make it out of this place without the enemy starting to lie to you and say, Nah, that's not that big of a deal. Nothing changed. You stood in a religious service. No, no, no. You trusted the Lord Jesus Christ with your life and he will be with you forever. And you can be assured of this when you stand before him on Judgment Day, here's what you'll hear. Well done good and faithful servant, welcome home. Welcome home. You belong to him. Amen.

I'd encourage you, if you don't have a church you're part of, you're always welcome at Brave. Your next step of faith would be to be baptized with water as a step of obedience as one of his disciples.

Right now, I'm going to turn it over to our Westminster campus with Pastor Justin and the other pastors there. And what we're going to be doing is we're going to be, I'm going to pray for us, we're going to be lighting candles here in a minute. Reminded of that night, that silent night, that holy night where the light of God came into the world. And symbolically what we're doing on all of our campuses tonight is as we start with one candle and light it, and then it spreads throughout this entire place as we worship the Lord, it's symbolic of what Christ has done, how he's come into the world, and he has taken our darkness and removed it because light always overcomes darkness.

Would you pray with me? Father in Heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and

praise for who you are. And Lord, we thank you tonight and we rejoice with all the saints who have gone before us, all the angels that are around your throne, celebrating the new names that you have brought into your kingdom that you've always wanted to bring. And Lord, I pray for each person here who is now indwelt with your spirit, that they would grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus, Lord, that you would let them know this is a new identity and a new life for them. And Lord, that they would live for you all the days of their life. Father, we celebrate you. We thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for your Holy Spirit who dwells us. And we thank you that your gospel is still alive. We give you all the praise and glory. In Jesus name. Amen.