

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**December 22, 2013**

**Jesus Is Born**

Read Luke 2:1-17

**Key verses:** “The angel said, ‘Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:10-11).

At this point in the Christmas season, many of us can relate to the two women who were at the mall doing last-minute Christmas shopping. Stressed-out and worn-out, they plopped down on a bench there in the mall. Bags and boxes fell at their feet. One of the women took a deep, exhausted sigh and said: “Mildred, aren’t you glad that God only had *one* son?!”

Sometimes, Christmas can be more of a hassle than a source of happiness. Whether it be the stress of the season, the commercialism, financial pressures, or the reminder of loved ones lost, sometimes Christmas isn’t so merry.

Whenever we find ourselves lacking the joy of Christmas, there is no better place to turn than to this account of Jesus’ birth. Mary and Joseph journey to Bethlehem. The baby is born in a cattle stall. The angelic messenger brings the news to the shepherds there under the stars. Then suddenly, a sleepy, ordinary night is filled with the glory of God.

“Look,” the angel tells the shepherds, “I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news.” More literally, in the language of the New Testament, that verse says, “Look, I announce to you a great joy!”

The angel announces the joy. And then the heavens explode with joy: “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

Christmas joy, the joy of Christ—that’s the joy that Christmas brings. That theme is evident in Luke’s account of Jesus’s birth. In Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth, we see that....

**1. *The joy of Christmas is the joy of promises fulfilled.*** There is something wonderful about promises being kept. On the other hand, there is something disheartening about a broken promise. Or, as the writer of Proverbs puts it, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.”

Broken promises steal our joy, but a promise kept brings joy. Part of the joy that exploded that night in the fields outside of Bethlehem was the joy of promises fulfilled.

Long ago, God had promised through the Old Testament prophets that He would send a messiah. Over hundreds of years, the details of that promise became more and more specific. For example, the prophet Micah prophesied that the messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah prophesied that the messiah would be born to a virgin and that this messiah would be heir to King David's throne.

The world took little note as a poor carpenter and his fiancé traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the Roman census. Nobody much cared—although Luke is careful to note it—that this Joseph was a descendant of King David. But on that night, God was tying together the threads of history, so that his promises would be fulfilled in the birth of the baby Jesus. Our joy comes from serving this God whose promises to us will never fail!

*2. The joy of Christmas is the joy of sins forgiven.* The angel said: "Your savior is born to you. He is Christ the Lord." Earlier, the angel had said to Joseph about Mary: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus came to save us from sin. Jesus was the one who would fulfill the Old Testament sacrificial system. Jesus was born to become the perfect "lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world."

A number of Bible scholars believe that those shepherds to whom the angels sang were taking care of the "temple flock," which were the animals used for sacrifice in the temple. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, would on the cross redeem us from the penalty and power of sin. The joy that Christmas offers to all is the joy of sins forgiven.

*3. The joy of Christmas is the joy of God with us.* In Christ, God came to be with us as one of us. By his Spirit, God is with us still, now and always! That, too, is the joy that Christmas brings.

Sandy Thompson's poem says it well:

*One starry night, a cold and lonely world,  
Men struggling to touch a far-off God.  
And then, one starry midnight in Bethlehem  
God bent down and gathered up the world  
In a warm, loving embrace  
—Christmas!*

(Contact Michael at [msigler@fumcfwb.com](mailto:msigler@fumcfwb.com).)

