

He Comes to Make His Blessings Flow Far as the Curse Is Found

Luke 2: 10 - 11

Isaiah 52: 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

- When Isaiah wrote those words, he wrote them in the context of a runner being sent to bring a message of victory to the people of a city.
 - In those days when an army went out from a city to do battle against an advancing enemy, watchman would stand on the walls of the city to wait to receive news of how the battle went. There were no cell phones, no radios, the only way for news to move from the battlefield to the city was on foot.
 - As the watchman stood and watched they were looking for one of two things. Either a few stragglers limping home, bloodied and beaten, which would bring news that their army had been defeated. Or, what the watchman and the city longed to see; a runner who was running as fast as he could to bring the good news of victory that would mean salvation, peace, and happiness.
 - This is our message too! It is the message of Christmas. Because the Son of God has come to our world, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." "For the people living in the land of despair hope has come."

Isaiah 9: 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Victory has come because our God has come to us. Our warrior king, our savior, who would defeat Satan, sin, and death has stepped down out of the throne room of heaven and been born to a peasant girl, in a stable, in Bethlehem.
 - As unlikely as it may seem, a baby lying in the manger, had come to reverse the curse of sin—to bring blessing as far as the curse is found. This is the message that the angels heralded to the shepherds who were in their fields keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Luke 2: 9 – 14 an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

- In 6 short verses, peace replaces fear because the blessings of God's Son coming to us, as our savior, overcomes the curse of our sin.
- Because of our sin, we are a people living in darkness, despair, and fear.

1. Because of the curse of sin fear fills our lives.

- I tell you all of the time that pride is at the root of all of our sin, but it is fear that fills our lives, as a result of our pride and sin. Let me illustrate from my own life.

- It was my pride that was at the center of my drive for reputation and success, but because I was consumed with those desires, I lived a life that was filled with fear. When I had brief, fleeting, momentary success, I couldn't enjoy it because I lived in fear of losing it all. When I didn't have success, I was consumed with fear that people would find out that I was failing.
- Think about Adam and Eve. It was pride that drove them to eat of the forbidden fruit. Eve resisted the temptation until Satan told her, "If you eat this, you will become like God." That's when she bit down hard on the fruit, and it was all driven by pride—a desire to be like God.
 - But once she and Adam ate the fruit, as a result of their sin, they became filled with shame and then fear as a result of the shame.

Genesis 3: 9 – 10 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

- Think about what happened, Eve took the fruit to give her a greater existence, but instead her existence, and our existence, became greatly diminished. Rather than glory, there was shame. Rather than blessing there was curse. Rather than peace and fulfillment there was fear.
- Since the fall of Adam and Eve, that has been humanity's lot in life—a life filled with fear because of the curse of sin.
- Just think of how all of our fears are rooted in the curse of sin.
 - Before they sinned, Adam and Eve had no fear of failure or shame, because it was impossible for them to fail. All of creation lived under their rule because God gave them dominion over creation. So, everything they did succeeded. But once the curse of sin came, nature rebelled against their rule.

Genesis 3: 17 cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

- Before they sinned, Adam and Eve had no fear of family dysfunction, of children growing up to be delinquent and reprobate. But now, because of the curse of sin, dysfunction filled the home.

Genesis 3: 16 "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

- That curse doesn't just involve the physical pain of bringing a child into the world. It involves the pain of all the family dysfunction—from rebellious kids to unfaithful and uncaring spouses.
- Before they sinned, there was no fear of illness or death, but look at us now. In the history of the world, there has never been a culture so fearful of death, so consumed with the futile effort of trying to hang onto life, as ours is today. Why? The curse of sin.

Genesis 3: 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

- There is so much fear that fills our lives and our world today. Fear of failure, fear of the future, illness and death. If we have to face this world on our own, apart from God, then we should be filled with fear, because we are no match for any of those things.
- But along with fear over all of those things, we all have a general floating fear, that maybe is hard to put our finger on, but is always there in the shadows. It is a fear of God drawing near to us.
 - Remember Adam and Eve's reaction when they sinned?

Genesis 3: 10 I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself

- But it is not just Adam and Eve, throughout the Bible, every time men encounter a holy God they melt in fear. Remember Isaiah?

Isaiah 6: 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

- Or Job:

Job 42: 4 – 6 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' ⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."


- Perhaps my favorite example is Peter after the miraculous catch of fish.

Luke 5: 8 – 9 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,

- ♦ Peter was just getting to know this Jesus. Right up until the miraculous catch of fish, Peter could put Jesus in a very nice box. He was a fellow human being, his teacher, his rabbi—a holy man, but the moment they hauled in all those fish at the command of Jesus, everything changed. Peter knew that, because of sin, man no longer had dominion over the fish in the sea. For Jesus to be able to command the fish, in the sea, meant Jesus was more than a mere man. He was God, and Peter couldn't stand the thought of his sinfulness being in the presence of a holy God. So what does he want? Distance.
- The book of Revelation is a book of contrasts between a humanity at peace with God in heaven and a humanity on earth living in fear. Fear of famine, earthquakes, fear of pestilence, fear of plagues, fear of economic upheaval, and most of all a fear of God.

Revelation 6: 15 – 17 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

- We see this same fear on display here with the angels and the shepherds, as the glory of the Lord shows up.

 **Luke 2: 9** an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

- That phrase great fear is an interesting phrase. At least from Linus' speech in the Charlie Brown Christmas Special, you may recall the way the old King James translation of the Bible puts it, "They were sore afraid." In the original Greek, Luke literally says the shepherds were filled with mega phobia.
 - Why mega phobia when the glory of God shows up? Because His beauty shows our ugliness. His holiness shows our sinfulness. His power our impotence. The light of His glory shows us our darkness and we can't take it.
 - We fear failure and death, but our biggest fear is being exposed for what we are. Until God shows up, we can live our lives as counterfeit gods, and some of us look pretty good doing that. The counterfeit looks good until you compare it to the real thing.
 - When Eve took the fruit it was because she wanted to be like God, or to put it another way she wanted to take God's position and be in charge. But in doing that, she took on for humanity a job that none of us are qualified to do. And knowing that we are unqualified for the job, knowing that we are not really in control of anything, including ourselves, fills us with fear.
 - When we have a job that we are not really qualified to do, we become filled with fear. A lot of times with other humans we can bluff our way through and at least to some extent hide just how unqualified we are for whatever the job is. But think what happens if someone who is the real deal shows up.
 - For instance, imagine impersonating a police officer. You would be a little anxious doing that in the public, but if a real officer show up at the scene, you would rightly be filled with fear. Fear of being exposed, and what follows exposure? Shame. As humans we live in constant fear of being embarrassed and put to shame.
 - But now think of this in terms of ourselves and God. In the Garden, when Eve took the fruit, she desired to become her own master, her own god, but we are totally unqualified for that job. No wonder we live in fear each day of being exposed.
 - We may look ok around other humans, but when God shows up, we know we will be completely exposed and ashamed. This is why we live with that sense of floating fear day in and day out and why we become filled with mega phobia whenever we end up in the presence of God.
 - But do you know what is really interesting as you look at the lives of people in the Biblical accounts? The people who have no fear of God really have everything to fear from God, and those who have a proper fear of God have nothing to fear from God.
 - On one hand, think of Pharaoh in Egypt. After God struck the Egyptians with the plague of hail, listen to what Moses said to Pharaoh:

Exodus 9: 29 – 30 Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the Lord. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord’s. ³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God.”

- ♦ And what happened as a result of that lack of fear? More devastating plagues, culminating in the death of all of the first born in Egypt, and eventually Pharaoh and his armies being drowned as the Red Sea closed back up over them. How much better would Pharaoh’s life had been if he had just had a proper fear of God?
- But on the other hand, consider what happened to all those I mentioned earlier who became properly filled with fear in the presence of God, like Isaiah, Job, and Peter? God makes a way for each of them to draw near and to fear not. That’s what we see happen here with the shepherds too, isn’t it?

2. The cure for fear

Luke 2: 10 – 11 “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

- What are the first words the angels speak to the shepherds? “Fear not!”
 - If you are a person who is living in fear, fear of the future, fear of uncertainty, fear of failure, fear of illness, fear of death, fear of being exposed for what you are, the angelic announcement of what happened in Bethlehem is the cure for all of your fears.
- “Fear not for behold.” As you think of the complete context in which the angel spoke those words to the shepherds, think what that phrase means. What were the shepherds to behold?
 - They were to behold the good news of great joy, which was: A baby who was wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, who was the savior Christ the Lord.
 - Think what the angels were saying to the shepherds and to you. They were saying, “The more you behold and treasure this good news of great joy concerning the savior who is Christ the Lord, the more your fears will be swallowed up in peace and happiness.” Why?

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

- Love casts out fear and at that first Christmas, through a baby, in a manger, God poured his love into our hearts. How? Because the baby would grow to be the savior bringing salvation.

1 Timothy 1: 15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

- The baby in the manger, was the savior, and as hard as it might be to think this way, the baby in the manger was born to die for our sins, so that we could live without fear.

Isaiah 53: 4 – 5 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

- If you want to get rid of fear of rejection, if you want to get over your fear of failure, if you want to get over your fear that all your good works just aren't good enough, if you want to be completely forgiven, if you want to be freed from guilt and filled instead with love, you behold, treasure and rest in the salvation the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths came to bring.

Isaiah 61: 10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness

- Completely forgiven and clothed in Christ's righteousness, there is no longer any need to fear drawing near to God. God's anger has not only been turned away from you, but there is also no need or reason to any longer fear what others might be saying or thinking about you because God is rejoicing over you.

Zechariah 3: 17 The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

- But what about our other fears? What about Covid or the next pandemic, or financial meltdowns, or dysfunctional marriages or dysfunctional kids? What is the answer to all of those fears?
 - The answer is the baby born in the manger is the Lord. He is God.
 - Think what that tells you about God.
 - ♦ The omnipotent God was willing to come to us, and make Himself nothing, an infant who was completely vulnerable.
 - At the end of time, the Book of Revelation tells us that God will return, but at that time it will be as King on a white horse, leading the armies of heaven, bent on reclaiming the kingdom that is rightfully his.
 - But when God came to us the first time, it was as a vulnerable baby in a manger. A baby who was born to die. A God this powerful, who loves you so much that He would willingly make himself so vulnerable that his creation could lay hands on Him and murder Him is a God you can trust completely with your life and with your future.

Romans 8: 31- 35 If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?.....³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?....³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor

height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. What happens when all of your fears are removed because of God's perfect love?

- Peace.

Luke 2: 14 on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased

- Over the years, there has been a lot of debate about how this phrase in Luke 2: 14 should read.
 - In the first mass produced English translation of the Bible, known as the King James version, it incorrectly reads "Peace on earth and good will to men." Extending God's peace to all mankind.
 - And because most of our favorite Christmas carols date back to that King James version, it's what most people think the angels said. That through the baby in the manger, God's peace and good will will come to all men. People really like that thought. It gives them the warm fuzzies that God loves everyone and is at peace with everyone.
 - But as you look at the entirety of Scripture, even just the New Testament, is that really true? I already referenced the way Revelation 19 pictures the second coming of Jesus, on a white horse leading the armies of heaven, and without going into detail, the picture very much is of a King coming bent on conquest, bent on justice, bent on reclaiming what is rightfully his. It's not the warm fuzzies at all. For those still in rebellion against the king, there is no good will, there is no peace.
 - Newer, more accurate translations, render what Luke wrote a little differently. What the angels actually say is this: "Peace to those on whom his favor rests."
 - So, it is not peace to all mankind, but rather peace to a certain group of mankind—a group that has come to know God's favor or God's blessing. Who are those who know God's favor? Those who know God's grace.

Colossians 1: 21 – 23 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.

- Before a person becomes a Christian and has peace with God through faith in the grace of God, they are enemies of God and at war with God. The Bible is quite clear that as long as we are in this state of war with God that God's favor does not rest upon us.

Romans 8: 7 – 8 ^{NLT} the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. ⁸ That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

- Apart from God's grace, apart from knowing the baby in the manger as Christ the Lord, there is no peace with God. Because apart from knowing Christ as savior, a person will always be at war with God, seeking to

control God, by seeking to be their own god—setting their own standards for how they live, their own standards of right and wrong.

- But a Christian is a person who knows God, fears God, and humbles themselves before God, knowing that they do not measure up to His standard of righteousness, and based on that knowledge they come to God seeking grace and mercy.

Colossians 1: 21 – 22 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

- Look what happens to you as a result of faith in Christ and his death for you. You are made holy and blameless and above reproach. So as a result, fear is gone.

Romans 8: 33 – 34 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

- Because the baby in the manger grew up and lived the life you should have lived, and died the death you deserved to die, you are reconciled to God and have peace with God, and God's good will for you now controls your life. Whatever God allows to come into your life is to work good in your life.

Romans 8: 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- Behold the baby, in the manger, who is the savior Christ the Lord, and think of the blessings that are yours, because God gave you the gift of His son. Do you know those blessings in your life, or are you still living in fear? Come to Jesus, come not just to the manger but to the cross and behold him. The lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
 - Be reconciled to God and find peace and favor with God, and complete security in the love of God, through faith in Christ's death for you.
 - And as you find those blessings in your life through faith in Christ, remember that you have been blessed to go be a blessing. By Christ's appointment, you are the means to go and make the blessings flow as far as the curse is found. Go with beautiful feet and bring the message of reconciliation to the world around you.

2 Corinthians 5: 18 – 20 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

- Through Christ, you know what forgiveness is, you know what repentance is, you know what love is, you know what true reconciliation is. Go and be a peacemaker, forgiving as you have been forgiven, loving others as you have been loved, publishing news of salvation, happiness and peace to the world around you.