

Scripture: Luke 2:8-15; Nehemiah 8:10; 2 Corinthians 12:10; Isaiah 7:14

Intro:

Good morning, church Family!

Its December! and you know what that means... Christmas!!

Its almost here!!

The season were we get to celebrate the birth of our savior

Today we are kicking off our new sermon series called Christmas Playlist

Most of you know what a playlist is...

Its that group of songs that you listen to depending on what's happening

- I have a playlist for car rides
- I have a playlist when I'm doing school work
- I have a playlist when I am writing sermons

Most of our playlist won't match up

But if we were to build a Christmas playlist.. I'm sure we would have a lot of similarities

And a lot of those songs... they point to Jesus

Some definitely don't

- Some of these new songs are a bit wild

BUT most do

- Most of our traditional Christmas songs point to Jesus

And

While we are celebrating Christmas we are reminded of Jesus coming in the flesh!

Most Christmas songs makes us feel something

- Festive, warm, nostalgic...

Today, we are looking at where the song "The First Noel" comes from in scripture

The First Noel is not about feeling

It's about hearing

It's an announcement

A message

A proclamation from Heaven

I want to take a look at the first couple verses of the Song

I will read them.... Because God called me to preach, not to sing, so I don't want to put you guys through that

“The first Noel the angel did say Was to certain poor shepherds In fields as they lay; In fields where they lay tending their sheep, On a cold winter's night that was so deep.”

- Before this song was ever sung... it was spoken by angels

Scripture:

It brings us to Luke which is probably one of the most read Gospel accounts when Christmas time comes around

Luke gives incredible details about the birth story of Jesus

[Luke 2:8–15](#) “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 that will cause great joy for all the people. ....Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, 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 heaven, and on earth peace to those 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.””

What we have here is part of the birth story of Jesus

This takes place right after Mary has given birth to Jesus

Some of the first to know about this news is..... Shepards

Ordinary lower class guys

- Not to rulers, religious elites... Shepards
- Out tending to their sheep
- doing Shepard like things
- looking at sheep
- stand there... at night

What's interesting is that God chose Shepherds

- They were often seen as untrustworthy
- Often unclean under Jewish law
- They would not be able to enter the courts of the temple

So for them to be the ones to spread this message it would be very unlikely

But God

Choose them to know about it firsthand

- Not by word of mouth, not by reading about it
- but a message that was delivered by angels

What I love is how much we can learn from this passage in scripture

- There is so much truth in 9 verses

But one of the first things that we can learn from this passage is

Good News promises joy

[Luke 2:10](#) “But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”

What we see is that the angels have GOOD NEWS that will bring GREAT JOY

So the question is...

What is this good news?

[Mark 1:1](#) “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,”

Marks starts his gospel with the same language

- The good news about Jesus the Messiah... the Son of God
- The Gospel
- Jesus Birth

The reason that we gather here this morning

This good news is why we celebrate this season

This is the moment that they have been waiting for

This news will do something in the lives of those who hear it

and it will cause GREAT JOY

This is word Joy is intentional!

- IT does not say that this news will cause great happiness
- IT does not say that this news will cause great vibes
- IT does not say that this news will cause great feelings

It says that this news will cause GREAT JOY

This good new should cause great joy inside you because it is personal!

[John 3:16](#) “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Yes Jesus came for the world

- But we often forget that WE are apart of that
- we all have heard it so many times that it could just be another thing that we “know” its almost normalized in our minds
- I personally went through a period where [John 3:16](#) no longer had power in my life but when you truly think about that
- The savior was born to take my place upon that cross - it should spark a great joy inside you!
- A real, deep, lasting Joy
- a Joy that will not grow dim despite everything that is going on in your life!

I want us to think about that for a second

Great Joy

a feeling that I think everyone wishes to walk around with

and some of us has experienced this Joy

But One thing that I have noticed though is we often mistake Joy and Happiness

There is a difference between Joy and Happiness

Joy vs Happiness

Happiness :

Happiness is temporary

Its a feeling that is great

- We all want to be happy
- Its better than most other emotions
- but it doesn't last
- Its dependent on your circumstance
- Maybe you felt it this morning
- You got up on time
- Everyone in the house got ready for church in time
- There were no delays
- No arguments, no whining,
- It was a beautiful day

BUT

Unfortunately something will happen today that will test your patience...

Something will try and ruin that happiness

See that's where we learn that there is a difference between happiness and Joy

Happiness is fleeting, it can be gone in a minute.

Joy :

Joy is deeper

Its more that internal feeling

- Joy can coexist with hardships
- You can be going through a difficult, confusing, scary season of life
- BUT still have Joy
- Knowing that no matter what you go through
- God is there with you
- Jesus is there with you
- You are not going through it alone
- That you will come out stronger
- Joy is constant

Have you ever met someone who it just seemed like they had every reason to complain

life looks rough

Like someone we would give that pass to

Yet their faith was louder than their pain.....

Thats not happiness... its Joy  
a joy that only God can give

[John 15:11](#) "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

This verse shows us that example truth

Jesus was speaking here and He was talking about abiding in him and that from abiding in him we receive HIS joy

His Joy is different than happiness

See Jesus joy is not the easy life  
Its not the perfect life  
Its not the life that looks polished

His Joy

Is knowing that we are right with God  
Knowing that we are in good standing with Him

And we all can have that Joy

But by abiding in Him

We are able to walk in complete Joy

God does not want us to settle for something that comes and goes.

Rather, He wants to grant us something that will last for eternity!

It is the promise of Good News!

It's exactly what the angel of the Lord says to these shepherds, who were minding their own business, good news will bring great joy.

This is why the Bible says elsewhere that "the joy of the Lord is your strength".

[Nehemiah 8:10](#) "Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'""

Nehemiah was trying to comfort the Israelites

Ezra had just read the Law of Moses to them

The Levites they were there and helping the people understand what it was saying  
Through this :

- They were just made aware that they had ignored God for so long
- they realized all of the sin that they were living in
- That they had not grown any

So when Ezra had read the Law to the people

They did not shout...

They did not rejoice...

The wept...

It was the first time they really saw their sin

It was the first time they really noticed their compromise

It was the first time they really saw their disobedience

and it broke them

they began to weep

But Nehemiah points out a truth here to replace that sorrow, that grief that they were feeling by saying :

The Joy of the Lord is your strength

Nehemiah was comforting them by letting them know that :

- The conviction that they felt, that was real
- The repentance that was needed
- But despair is not your destiny

And this is where it connects to our Christmas story...

The Shepards were not Joyful because of the season they were in

- Life was not perfect for them
- They were Joyful because a Savior was born
- just like the Israelites
- The Shepards joy wasn't rooted in their performance
- Their joy wasn't rooted in the circumstance
- It was rooted in Gods mercy

Today

We don't rejoice because we are perfect  
We rejoice because Jesus came for imperfect people

That's why the Joy of the Lord is our strength

- Not our goodness...
- Not our consistency...
- Not our righteousness...

But His

When we decide to not only hear the Good News of Jesus coming, crucifixion, and resurrection, but hold to it,

the joy God gives us through obedience becomes our source of strength.

It's probably why Paul says this in his later writing...

[2 Corinthians 12:10](#) “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul, He was going through it!

- He was not laid back on vacation, he wasn’t cruising down to the Bahamas
- Paul had been under persecution
- In and out of prison
- And Paul he writes about this thorn in his flesh
- He said it was a messenger of Satan
- and the goal was to torment Paul

YET what he is declaring is that no matter what i may be going through

My Joy is in the Lord

He is where I find my strength

The circumstance was not great but Paul knew who was

That’s the type of faith that we can have!

That we could notice something in our life that the pure goal of it is to torment us

It may be:

- Addiction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sickness
- Family issues
- Temptation

YET WE HAVE JOY

Joy is not the absence of pain

Joy is the presence of God

This Good News.. it promises Joy

The second thing we notice is that

## 2. Good News Prompts Praise

When we accept and believe the Good News of Christ, we are meant to radiate the joy that we are promised, which only comes from the Lord.

[Luke 2:13–14](#) “Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.””

This Good news prompted Praise

This News wasn't based on something that God had done in the moment

- It was not based on a miracle that they saw yet
- It was not based a healing they witnessed
- it was not based on a problem being solved
- It was based on a promise...

This good news that the angel had brought

Has now turned into praise

The news of a savior should result in praise

Most of us in this room has heard and received this message

We have given our life to the Lord  
We walk in His Joy

So it should result in praise

People should be able to see it in our life

But so many of us who have heard this message  
lived in it so long

- It has become dull
- Its not something we talk about any more
- ITs not something we give praise to anymore
- Its just another thing for us

When the Angels heard this messages they broke out in Praise

In our life today

We act out in praise after something GOOD has happened

- After the prayer was answered
- After the problem was fixed
- After the bills are paid

But We should be praising God through the hardships

- through the ups and the downs
- Through the doubts
- Through the pain

[2 Corinthians 1:3–4](#) “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

We should be praising God at all times  
Because through it all  
He is there comforting us

In the original language this word Comfort

- The idea behind it is strengthening, Helping, and making strong
- 2 Corinthians doesn't say he comforts us through SOME of our troubles
- It says ALL our troubles
- Praise should not only happen once God does something
- Praise should be an ongoing, daily, minute by minute activity...

When was the last time you really praised God?

When was the last time you really thanked Jesus?

Our praises should be heard and made known to who we are praising

This is the best news we could ever receive  
It should cause so much joy in our life  
SO WHY ARE WE SO QUITE ABOUT IT...

This is something that goes all the way back before the angels came and announced the coming of Jesus

If we go back to the Old Testament, we see why this news held such high significance

[Isaiah 7:14](#) “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

A promise was made

This promise is made and written in the Book of Isaiah, approximately 700 years before the birth of Jesus in Luke 2.

And yet, even then, God was prophesying that one day, He would come in the flesh  
Think about the excitement that would have come now that this prophesy was finally here  
It's been 700 years of waiting, watching, being ready  
And Now, Here we are

The Messiah is here in the flesh and will walk with His people.

and even now

Now that we have recieved this good news  
Its and invitation for us to praise God for this gift

What I love about youth ministry

- When Students receive Jesus
- The aren't afraid to praise Jesus
- I think as adults we tend to get afraid to praise Jesus
- We start to overthink and over analyze everything
- who is in the room
- Who is watching me
- Not the youth
- They praise
- They invite
- They share it on social media
- Conference
- When we go to youth conference its alway a lot of fun
- There are many fun moments
- But the most rewarding moment is when worship starts
- The second the students see the band
- or catch on that worship is about to happen
- They RUN down to the altar
- They want to be the first one down there
- They throw their hands up in the air
- Sing at the tops of their lungs
- Dance for Jesus
- At the conference we just attended
- Around 2,000 people of those around 1,500 were students
- They praised, worshiped, did not care who was around,
- they heard the good news and the result was Joy and Praise!

It challenges me

Despite what they think.. I'm not that much older than them  
Yet my praise is not like that

We see that the angels turn to praising

what about the Shepards?

[Luke 2:15](#) "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.""

The third point is that : Good news invites Us

This Good News it prompted action

They could not stay silent, they could not stay still  
They had to go see this Messiah that was just talked about

They could have ignored this message

- They could have had thoughts like
- We are just Shepards
- Why would we be told this information
- No one would believe us

But

They quickly responded

- The shepherds' obedience leads them to personally witness God's promise fulfilled.
- True joy is found in encountering Jesus firsthand - something we ALL have the opportunity to do
- All you have to do is call upon His name.

At that same conference :

- The students not only ran to the altar to praise
- But also experience
- One by one
- Students left their seats
- To go and meet Jesus
- To go and experience first hand what they were just taught about
- There was a moment that the altar was flooded with students
- the aisles were flooded with student
- There wasn't room to walk
- you had to literally climb over students to go and pray for them
- This good news led them to go and experience Jesus

Call out to Him

In that moment...

- I realized... id been going through a lot of the motions that weekend
- I was caught up in the "business side of it"
- Everyone got here safe - good
- Hotel is figured out - good
- What about lunch?
- Where did Sadie run off too?

I was so caught up in all those things that

I myself hadn't taken a moment with Jesus

We get caught up in all of the tasks that we have to do daily

That we forget to have that moment with Him

We forget to spend that time with Him

We forget that He is inviting us in daily

Its on us to answer that invitation...

- I believe that this Good News changes lives because I have seen it personally
- I believe it offers something that this world can never offer
- Eternal and everlasting
- I believe this Good News brings great Joy to those who hear it and accept it
- I believe it brings peace to those who need

This is more than a song

More than something you add to a playlist

This song reminds us that this good news is for us today

This is brings Life, Joy and Strength

Conclusion:

So today... we stand in the same place that the Shepards once did

- They were ordinary people
- They were often over looked
- They were working a night shift
- nothing about that night was special... until heaven opened
- and in a moment everything had changed
  - o The sky lit up
  - o The fear rushed in
  - o and then a voice spoke
  - o I bring good news that will bring great joy for all people
    - Not just church people
    - Not just the pastors
    - Not just perfect people
    - But for all people!
      - The Joyful
      - The broken

- The addicted
- The doubting
- The tired
- The one that walked in here giving church, Jesus, Life one last chance

The Good news is still for you today

the good news is that :

- A savior was born
- Peace has been offered
- And Joy was released into a dark and desperate world

Just like those Shepards

Today we have a choice to make

- They could have stayed still
- They could have made up any excuse not to go
- They could have denied the message that was brought

But they didn't

- They moved
- They responded
- They believed

This morning the ball is in your court

will you just hear about this good news  
OR will you believe this good news

Belief leads to movement

- It leads to surrender
- It leads to worship
- It leads to change

The angels worshiped

The Shepards went to go see

Now its our turn

- Some of us in the room need peace in the midst of chaos

- Some of us need Joy again
- Some of us need strength because the seasons been heavy
- Some of us need to stop chasing happiness and receive Joy

The Good news is that Jesus didn't just come

BUT

That he is still here today

- and that he is still
- Saving
- Restoring
- Healing
- Strengthening
- transforming

This morning

if you believe the Good news

- Let it move you
- let it soften you
- Let it restore you
- Let it lead you

The first Noel was not written to make us feel something

It was written to remind us that

- Heaven has spoken
- A savior is born
- Joy is available
- Peace is possible

Pray