

Series Title: Christmas: Beloved Myth or Life Changing Truth?

Sermon Title: Week 3: The Testimony of the Angels

Date: 12-22-19

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### ✠ The Celestial Birth Announcement

- *In Matthew and Luke's narratives- FOUR announcements- by angels- about Jesus birth.*
- *In these greetings brought by the Angels, they weren't just giving birth announcement, they brought essential information- TRUTH- essential to us today*
- *The angels testimony are all different, but there is a CRUCIAL (and identical) message contained in each*

### ✠ Divine greetings (what do these all have in common?)

- *Zecharia, Joseph, Mary, and the Shepherds..*

In each encounter, the consistent message of the Angels is **DO NOT BE AFRAID!**

- *Friends, throughout the New Testament we see the command, the encouragement, call, and invitation – in midst of life as it really is, to NOT BE AFRAID.*
- *This message begins with Christmas, with the Angels announcement of Christ's birth*
- *In Matthew 1, the Angel in Matthew's vision goes on to tell him to name his son Jesus, because He will SAVE PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS. AND an inseparable part of how we are SAVED from the brokenness of sin is by being set free from the bondage of FEAR.*
- *!!The gospel's message of freedom from fear is NOT.. A cliché. Not trite promise that if we just believe right, pray enough, follow religious formula that our fear will magically disappear.*
- *God's deliverance from fear is not a promise of deliver.. from the circum.. that give rise to our fear.*
- *RATHER, as we look through the NT at all the instances where we are taught to not be afraid, what we find are VERY REAL PEOPLE caught up in very difficult circumstances, who grew to experience deliverance from fear one step, one moment at a time... this happened as they came to understand God's TRUTH to them, and as they came- by faith- to experience God's PRESENCE TO THEM.*
- *SO, lets go back to our Angels and the testimony they brought. In scripture references I've given larger context. In each story I'm going to focus in on one TRUTH, one reason IN CHRIST we don't have to be afraid.*

### ✠ The Angels Testimony

- *START with story of Zecharia, along with his wife Elizabeth. God's purpose for Zecharia and Elizabeth would be as the parents of man we know as John the Baptist, who would be used by God to announce the beginning of Jesus' ministry.*
- *But in this part of the story, Zecharia and Eliz had a problem.*

**Luke 1:5-20** *In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. <sup>6</sup> Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. <sup>7</sup> But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.*

- *In ancient Jewish culture one of the greatest shames a woman could know- and also for her husband- was the lack of a child. The story hints that Z&E had been praying for a son all their lives. Zecharia was a priest who one day was chosen to go into the temple, away*

**from the crowds, to burn incense on the alter. Even though we are told he and Elizabeth were both very devout, we get the sense that Zecharia was just going through the motions. He was praying to God, but he didn't expect God to show up. THEN God did.**

<sup>11</sup>Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

- **DON'T BE AFRAID, God hears you. He knows your story. He knows your fear, your pain, your heart.**
- **To Zecharia, the angel said...**

• To Zechariah: **Do not be afraid, God KNOWS you**

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- **NEXT announcement is to Joseph. Considering divorcing Mary... No question he is afraid. His entire life has been derailed...**

**Matthew 1:18-23** <sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, **do not be afraid** to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> 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."

- **JOSEPH... God knows you are afraid. But things are NOT AS THEY SEEM. What seems like your greatest fear is actually part of God's plan.**

• To JOSEPH (not matthew!): **Do not be afraid, God is at WORK**

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- **NEXT, of course, is Gabriel's greeting to Mary.**

**Luke 1:28-37** <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.

- **Mary's entire world is about to be turned upside down. She is TROUBLED. In response, Gabriel says... DON'T BE AFRAID! You have found favor with God. You are HIGHLY FAVORED.**
- **MARY! God knows you. He cares about you. His Grace and favor are with you. You are precious to God. Your life has meaning to Him beyond anything you could imagine.**

• To Mary: **Do not be afraid, God greatly VALUES you, He is trustworthy**

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- **LASTLY, we come to the Shepherds.**

**Luke 2:8-14** <sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "**Do not be afraid.** I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

- **The shepherds were just going about their life. Perhaps more than any other, their terror was the sudden and overwhelming presence of God's glory.**
- **I think we have Luke's summary here... we don't have to imagine very much to hear the angel say...**
- **IT'S OKAY! Keep calm! I know you've never expected anything like this to happen. You've never expected for God to show up in this way. This is WAY outside of your experience. BUT DON'T BE AFRAID! We have GOOD NEWS, that will cause GREAT JOY. All your life you have hoped for the MESSIAH- for deliverance... HE IS HERE. NOW!**

• To the Shepherds: *Do not be afraid, God brings HOPE to you*

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

† As the promised Messiah, Jesus’ birth heralded the coming of God’s Peace.

– *Jesus would tell his disciples.. “MY PEACE I give you” A generation later the apostle Paul would describe the PEACE that passes understanding.*

– *700 or so years earlier the prophet Isaiah wrote...*

**Isaiah 9:6** *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

– *Jesus came to that IN HIM we may not be afraid. That IN HIM we may know God’s peace! AND...*

Reality! *We will not EXPERIENCE God’s peace when we are living in FEAR.*

– *Lets look at three instances in Jesus’ life when he told those with him NOT to be afraid, AND WHAT this teaches us.*

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– *On the night that Jesus was arrested, knowing that His disciples were about to experience the greatest fear of their entire lives, Jesus said...*

**John 14:26-28** *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

† We may experience deliverance from fear by the presence of the SPIRIT *We are not alone!*

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– *On the morning of his resurrection, a group of women close to Jesus returned to his tomb, their worlds having just been destroyed.*

**Matthew 28:5,9-10** <sup>5</sup> The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said...

<sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

† We may experience deliverance from fear by the reality of the RESURRECTION

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– *Last example, during Jesus’ time with his disciples. They are next to the sea of Galilee, the miracle of feeding of 5000 has just happened...*

**Matthew 14:22-27** <sup>22</sup> Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>23</sup> After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

<sup>25</sup> Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. <sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

– *Do we see this?! In the midst of the storm, their fears, and their misunderstandings, their deliverance from fear was Jesus himself.*

- **CHURCH- this Christmas- may we BELIEVE that we don't have to be afraid because in the midst of life as it really is...**
  - **God knows us**
  - **God is at work**
  - **God values us**
  - **God is a bringer of HOPE**
  - **GOD IS WITH US- Immanuel- In Christ, we are indwelled by the Holy Spirit**
  - **Our faith, our hope, our LIFE- is founded in the reality of the resurrection**
  - **TODAY, one step at a time.... Just as was true for Jesus' disciples in that boat in the midst of the storm....**

✠ We may experience deliverance from fear through a RELATIONSHIP with Christ.

- **Today. What is your fear?**

In the midst of our fear, will we listen, by faith, and hear Jesus say... *“Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.”*