

*It's a wonderful life 3*

*A Time To Celebrate*

*Luke 2:8-12*

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**Introduction:** This is the time of year, for those who do not attend church services on a regular basis to attend. So as a pastor, I hear things like If I were to show up on Christmas Sunday the roof would fall in, I would get struck by lightning-Pick your natural disaster.

So Where does our unreasonable fear of God come From? Mainly from two sources: a guilty conscience and ignorance of What God is really like. The Bible Says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." Guilt makes us insecure.

In the movie it's a wonderful life, George Bailey goes through unreasonable paranoia that God is out to get him.

***Move From Fear to Joyfully Praising God for the Good News Luke 2:8-10***

***And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the Lord appeared***

*to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

What a Birth Announcement! Most Americans are satisfied with a stork in the front Yard or a cigar-but God sends a whole Choir of angels. The Shepherd were terrified, but their fear turned to joy as the angels announced the Messiah's birth. First the Shepherds ran to see the baby; then they spread the word. Jesus is your Messiah, your Savior-You and I just on those two truths have much to praise and celebrate this Christmas. But, sometimes we are cold spiritually we have not preheated the oven all year Long and then on Christmas we expect to be on fire for Jesus. To discover Praise and Joy ask yourself do I look forward to meeting him in prayer on a daily basis? Have you discovered a Lord so wonderful you can't help but praise him! Have you discovered the Christ Child that is so Awsome you can't help spread the word?

Sometimes babies are given two or Three Middle names to honor relatives. God commanded that Jesus be given several names to explain his purpose for coming to earth. One of Jesus names is Immanuel. It means God with us.

The Shepherds all of their life had been told by the masses they were unfaithful and unworthy of God's Love. They did not bath months on end. Their job kept them from many religious rituals. They were reported to be thieves. In society they were on the lowest rung. It's no wonder the angels told the Shepherds, "Do not be afraid!" The presence of the angels, ushered in the peace of God's Love. You lose your fear when God is near. When God is near, celebration breaks out. God's presence trumps our panic.

One reason for our unreasonable fear of God is our guilty conscience. Let's be honest-we all carry secret, hidden guilt from things we've done wrong, and we feel ashamed of ways we have acted and treated others. This is what causes us to assume God is mad at us and that he's going to scold us for the ways we have fallen short. So we avoid God and even talking about him. I am certain this is part of the reason the Shepherds were terrified that first Christmas.

But, The Angels command that Came to Fear not-is a statement to mankind that God is not mad at you.

He is mad about you! Jesus said in John 3:17; ***God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.***

***John 3:17 NLT*** If you study the life of Jesus, you will quickly see

that when you make a mistake, Jesus doesn't rub it in. He rubs it out. He came to erase all your sins, mistakes, failures, and regrets. That's why the first statement the angel made to the shepherds was "Do not be afraid!" Jesus came to save us, not scare us! It is a reason to celebrate with praise this Christmas.

Christmas will come and go like every year, and afterward some will say, 'We had a quiet Christmas, thank God.' But Christmas is not meant to be quiet. It's meant to explode with the roar of the crowd when its team gets the score. It's meant to laugh with the joy of parents whose child has just been born. It's meant to be a voice of care, compassion and love, the voice of angels announcing the birth of Christ. Make this Christmas wonderful by living out loud with celebration.

***Move From Ignorance to Joyfully Sharing The Good News with Everyone. Luke 2:13-20***

***Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."***

***15When 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."***

***16So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby,***

*who was lying in the manger. 17When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

The greatest event in history had just happened the Messiah had been born! For ages to the Jews had waited for this, and when it finally came, the announcement came to the humble shepherds. The good news about Jesus is that he comes to all, including the plain and the ordinary. He comes to anyone with a heart humble enough to accept him. Whoever you are, whatever you do, you can have Jesus in your life. Don't think you need extraordinary qualifications-he accepts you as you are.

**Conclusion.** The birth of Christ reminds us that no one want's what's

best for you more than God. No one knows better what will make you truly happy! God doesn't want you to be afraid of him. He wants you to run to him, not from him. In fact, 365 times in the Bible God says, "don't be afraid!" That's one "fear not" for every day of the year! So

what are you afraid of ? None of us knows what we'll face in this next year, but we can know that God loves us, God is with us, and God is for us. One plus God is a Majority in any situation.

Because of today's fast pace of life, we quickly forget all the good things God does for us, and we move on to the next challenge. That's why I recommend an annual celebration, a Birthday Party for Jesus. Tonight we are hosting the party, with a Christmas play and a party afterward. But you do not need to attend Church building to have a birthday party for Jesus. You can have it in your home with family and close friends. Schedule it just to pause and review God's Grace in your life and to recommit yourself to knowing and loving Jesus in the coming year is the best way to a wonderful year. Jesus is the reason for the Season!

Since, none of us knows what we'll face in this next year-why not commit to celebrate Christmas 365 days in the coming year. Start today by Recommitting your whole life in Celebration of Christ-and then make this commitment everyday in the coming year. If you have never made a commitment to follow and love Jesus-would you do so by coming up front to share your love of Jesus and to be publicly dipped in water to show your new life in Christ. If this is your decision come up

front as we stand to sing!