Sermon Christmas Day 2021

Title: “Fear Not!”

Texts: Isa. 62:10-12, Titus 3:4-7, Luke 2:1-20

Prayer & Salutation

**Bridge**

 **Merry Christmas! By now you are all basking in the glow of what you have seen and heard here this Christmas season. For some, this is the joy one feels in knowing the Christ came from heaven to earth for you, for others, warm fuzzies they get just sitting and resting in the peace of a still night after everyone else has gone to bed, and for others, feelings that they would rather not address at all, but just must put up with, because quite frankly, life is life. Pastor Alebachew stressed something about that at the third Advent service…feelings. We human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and we, therefore, have *feelings*. Pastor Alebachew said that God “cried”. And we most certainly do as well, especially this time of year, when we are joyful, grateful and thankful to God for His grace and mercy in sending His Son. But conversely are sad, lonely, fearful, and overwhelmed by so many things and sometimes downright despondent, because of all of it hitting at the same time, and so, we surely show our emotions. And this night, on the day Jesus was born, those feelings all came out, by parents going through childbirth, and shepherds rejoicing as our Luke text says.**

 **Therefore, the verses I’d like to focus on are those from a section in my Bible titled: “The Shepherds and Angels”. It is never odd to me how the context of the day fits how the Spirit moves we shepherds to relate the Gospel to people. I have preached this text many times before, focusing on this or that, but never like this before, for God leads us to tell what He wants His people to hear…today.**

 **But that day in Bethlehem, God chose to send His messengers the angels to a peculiar, particular people, other kinds of Shepherds, who were in the fields tending another kind of sheep. And the first thing they addressed with them was our human emotions, our fears. The first words out of the mouth of the angel were, “Fear Not!” Of course, in this context, it meant, “don’t be afraid of me,” but the next two connector words mean something else about our fears. He said, “for Behold,”. It was like he was saying, “listen to this, because it is fantastic, and your fears will about everything will now be gone! Because God is now keeping His promise to you and His people, all you have heard by the prophets for centuries about the Messiah is now coming to pass! Listen up!” And the angel continued in verse ten, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”**

 **This would have been enough to convince me to leave that very instant to search for the infant. But to top it off, other angels joined in the joy of the moment proclaiming, “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.” Peace to those who have been *waiting*. *Peace and no more fear*! The Savior had come.**

**Law**

 **The Savior from what? What did these shepherds fear besides an angel? In the context of the times, surely the Romans who had conquered them, and in reality, it is no different today for we fear war and governments as well. Surely, they feared many of the same things we do today: lack of our daily bread, riots, collapse of society and financial systems, persecution, their health, death, and so many other injustices. They didn’t trust God to provide or defend. They forgot who their God was. Nor do we remember. And when we look back, we know that they were sinners just like us. And they knew it. We know it. They feared a just and righteous God because of that and so should we. He is pure and Holy. And He asks us to be- perfect, but we cannot. We sin; over and over again. And at the last day, when Jesus returns for judgement, we will see just how much we have done so. Therefore, again, we should fear Him. Therefore….**

**Gospel**

 **He came to be a Savior from sin! When God makes a promise to His people, He keeps it. We should be in awe of *that*. That’s what these messengers from God were proclaiming. His promise was fulfilled to the world right there in Bethlehem, and these Shepherds were invited to see. How cool is that? And that brought them great joy! Going into town they found it as the angel had said. The shepherds were overjoyed to tell all that God had said through the angel and what He would do in the person of the Christ. And He was there. In a manger. In the city of David. And all that heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. The Incarnate miracle gift was there…and feelings ran high.**

 **Christmases, ever since that day have run on feelings. As proof of that, I submit to you- The Hallmark movie channel! Although there is nothing in scripture that says the shepherds came back to Bethlehem every year until they died, there is nothing in scripture that says that they didn’t. (I’d like to think that they made that pilgrimage every year. How could one not? Especially after hearing of Herod’s plan later on! They’d always wonder, “Did He survive? Is His promise still alive?”) An event like what they experienced would change anyone’s life- *forever*. And lives are changed to this day. We remember so many good times with our families on this day. And we continue to experience them as we come together in our homes and here with the multitude of saints! Sometimes it makes us happy, sometimes glum, but always joyful, because we remember the reason for it all, Jesus came for us. And we will celebrate Christmas every day in heaven with those that have gone before us.**

 **And here we are, this Christmas Day, separated by 25 generations from that glorious first coming. By His word and the power of the Spirit, we celebrate and are joyful, knowing that He came and fulfilled all that He was promised to do. Jesus then lived a perfect life, died as Isaiah said He would, He healed the lame, made the blind see, and opened the ears of the deaf, and then He himself rose again from the dead, that we might, by faith in Him and His promise to save, rise at His calling from our graves to share in eternal life with Him and His bride. Whether we *feel* God’s great gift of salvation or not, there is no longer a need to fear. For or about *anything*. His promises all come true. We wait just like the shepherds and thousands of generations waited and we, too, will not disappointed. He will come again at an hour we do not know. Just like the first Christmas. Until then, we show the world our joy, free from fear and dismay, for Christ has come to save us from our sins and will come again to take us home. That’s His promise. And His great gift for all the Christmases past, present and future. Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

**Amen.**