

Fear not. I bring you the Gospel

CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24, 2017

Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

Luke 2:8-9:

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

The shepherds are out in the middle of the hills, watching the sheep. They're listening for wolves, on guard for any danger, and then, all the sudden,

“an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.”

[Luke 2:9]

So the shepherds are afraid. Greatly afraid, Luke tells us.

But not just because of the spectacle in the sky. Also because of what the angels said, their message. The angels said:

“There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you, you will find a Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

[Luke 2:11]

A little child, who, by coming into this world, causes grown men to shake in fear. Because, this Baby in a manger, heralded by the holy angels, is, himself, **Holy God. Christ the Lord.**

The shepherds are men of this world. They know how unholy it is. They know if you don't watch your

sheep, they'll be stolen. They know how even children and babies have to be protected from those who do violence. They know of families not kept in the Lord's Word, and that even includes them. They know also of Holy God. But now they get to see how Holy God will come into this unholy world.

God appoints a specific place—Bethlehem.

He appoints a specific time—the days of Caesar Augustus.

And he sets a specific person—Mary.

And at His own, specific, designated time, place, and person, God places a holy Baby.

When all these eyes of the world, these unholy eyes, look on the holy Baby, there is great fear.

Because, no sinner can withstand the holiness of God, especially when it is placed right in front of our eyes.

Silent Night, Holy Night,

Shepherds quake at the sight.

We fall silent.

What else can unholy ones do when standing in God's holiness?

We, too, know the unholiness. It's our sin. It's the sin of our world which covers us in shame. It's the sickness and death brought by sin.

It's the sin belonging to us from our parents, Adam and Eve, so that we are born into sin. That means our hearts are unholy, even from our conception.

What do you do when you can't find holiness in your heart? For the heart is not only sinful, it is deceitful. Any holiness it constructs is a false holiness.

The little Baby in Bethlehem is holy. We find our holiness in him. He rescues us from the temptation to find our holiness in our own hearts.

After all, the Baby Jesus did not come in our hearts; he came in a certain specific location—Bethlehem of Judea.

And holiness did not come from our desires or our spirits; it came from outside of us, from the Holy one, Jesus. So that when God placed this Baby in that manger in Bethlehem, shepherds quaked in fear, and Herod the powerful king trembled until he finally came up with a plan to kill the holy Baby.

When God sets holiness in front of sinners, there is fear. All mouths are stopped.

Silent night, Holy Night,

Shepherds quake, at the sight.

But then the angels say,

“Fear not. For I bring you the Gospel of joy, which is to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Fear not!—the great word of comfort from the angels. It is true that this Baby is the Holy One. And it is true that all men are unholy. But, there is good news, there is the Gospel, say the angels, and it is this:

The Holy One comes into the flesh to remove your sins from you, and bring you into His holiness.

The Holy Son of the Father is born not to condemn the sinner, but to die for the sinner; not to convict, but to absolve.

“Fear not!”

say the angels,

“for this Baby is the message of joy!”

The Silent Night is silent no longer. The shepherds who quaked in fear may now embrace the Baby. This baby is the Lord's holiness *for* themCa gift, God's free gift of grace.

And all in the Church at the time of Mary and Joseph and the shepherds, and at our time tooCall in the Church are gathered around the Holy One, to hear His Name, to hearken to His word of forgiveness, to be gathered to the comfort of His service, to be given His blood of life, and the words we hear from him are the Gospel:

AFear not. I forgive you all your sins.@

The Holy One, Jesus, came into the world to be with the unholy ones, to take their unholiness to himself, and to put it to death on the cross.

The unholy ones, us, you and me and our children, we are cleansed by him, and by his word, our fear is taken away, and we now stand holy.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.