

Small Group Questions

O.T.: Isaiah 52:7-10; N.T. Luke 2: 8-14
SERMON TITLE: ALL HEAVEN BROKE LOOSE
Series Title: The Carols of Christmas # 4
Week of December 24th, 2017

THEME/ CONCEPT

Jesus' birth sent waves of holy awe throughout the heavens and can do the same on earth. When has such a thing happened? The Son of God born of a virgin! The King of Glory born in obscurity! The news of his birth proclaimed in the heavens to humble shepherds in their fields! Jesus' birth was riddled with paradoxes and showed that God's way certainly are not our ways. "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" communicates the awe and wonder: "veil'd in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity." While every phrase is ripe with theological richness and imagery, the essence of Jesus' life and mission is captured in the final three lines of the last stanza: "Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die; born to raise us from the earth; born to give us second birth."

APPLICATION

Jesus' birth sent waves throughout the heavens and can do the same on earth.

CHARGE

Tell the Good News of God's amazing love in Christ.

Opening Question

Q: "Hark" means simply "Look!" or "Pay attention!" To what (or to whom) do you find yourself listening this Christmas Eve?

LYRICS: "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled
Joyful all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heav'n adored:
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail, the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with men to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail! the heaven born Prince of peace!
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings;
Mild he lays his glory by
Born that man no more may die:
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Scripture References: O.T. Isaiah 52:7-10

7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" 8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. 9 Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Understanding the Scripture O.T.

1. Verse 7: What images and characteristics are assigned to those who "bring good news?"
2. Verse 8: "Listen!" is a pause, similar to every verse in "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" ends with the command to "Hark!" To what is the reader being commanded to listen? What will they see with their own eyes?
3. Verse 9: Why does the prophet instruct the ruined city to sing?

4. Verse 10: Why will the LORD lay bare his arm? What will be seen?

Scripture References N.T. Luke 2:8-14

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Understanding the Scripture N.T.

1. Verses 8-9: Describe the pastoral scene. What appeared? What did the shepherds feel?
2. Verses 10: What does the angel say to alleviate their fear?
3. Verse 11: Describe the credentials of this new baby.
4. Verse 12: What is the sign that the shepherds will behold?
5. Verses 13-14: Who appeared? What did they begin saying?

Applying the Scripture

Small groups are a primary way of *building a community fully alive in Christ*. A small group facilitator can use questions like the following, adapted to the context of the particular small group, to help the group move beyond understanding the passage to allowing *Jesus Christ to fully change our lives* by the passage.

1. Imagine the angels singing in harmony as they celebrate the newborn King, with you serving as a tiny, humble audience. What do you hear? Feel? What could you be thinking, as the witness to a supernatural choir?
2. This hymn and the prophecy from Isaiah both tell us to celebrate and to “SEE.” What do you find yourself “seeing,” and how does this contrast with what you desire to “see?” (ie: seeing earthly troubles vs. fixating on eternity). What did the shepherds see with their human eyes—how do you imagine this began to awaken their spiritual vision?
3. The hymn reminds us that Christ is literally the Godhead “veiled in flesh.” There is so much beyond the veil—so much beyond what our dimly lit eyes can now see. What else do you celebrate during this holy season?
4. There is a progression, within the hymn, as within Christ’s own life. His course was predestined, but as the music swells, we begin by hailing a babe-

“offspring of a Virgin’s womb” to hailing the fulfillment of prophecy. He is the “heaven born Prince of Peace” and “Son of righteousness,” a King sent to suffer and die before being resurrected. What else stands out to you in these verses?

5. A Savior born into obscurity came to save mankind, yet he is at one with the same Lord who lays bare his arm to display his strength to “ends of the earth.” When a king lay bare his arm, it was traditionally seen as a show of strength. How marvelous that this tiny baby was also the incarnation of the mighty Lord described in the verses from Isaiah! What other paradoxical teachings/images/ experiences have you wrestled with in your personal journey of faith?

Missional Strategy: Invite, Connect, Grow and Serve

Use questions like the following, adapted to the context of your particular small group, to work toward the milestone for the year.

Milestone: By this time next year each of us will have taken at least one step to become more like Jesus in our upward connection (connect), inner strength (grow) and outward focus (serve)

- a. Connect: How can we share this good news with friends, neighbors, or relatives right now?
- b. Grow: How can you remind yourself to pray?
- c. Outward focus: Look for the hurting. Christmas brings the tension of the “already and not yet.” This time is full of both joy and sorrow for so many of us- lean into the sorrow and come alongside the brokenhearted, and pray earnestly for a childlike heart that embraces the joy of Christ’s birth with abandon.

Closing Prayer

If your small group prays together, some of the following concepts might be helpful to invite the Holy Spirit to help each member of the group grow in areas that may have come up during the group's discussion.

Pray....

- to be slow to speak, and quick to listen
- to always be ready with an answer for the hope that you have, and for the Holy Spirit to equip you to share the Good News
- to look for those in need
- to be as Christ- “pleased as man with men to dwell”- easier said than done, when you look at how messy it is to do life with others!