

# Good News of Great Joy

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[ 0 : 00 ] Luke chapter 2 verses 8 through 20 will be our text this morning. Would you stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together?

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the 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. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased. When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger.

[ 1 : 33 ] And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. All who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? When I was in seminary, our professors would often tell us to choose one living and one deceased pastor or theologian to learn from.

We were to learn from both their successes and their failures in ministry and the thought that in doing so, we would have examples for ourselves of what to do and what not to do or what to avoid in ministry.

The deceased pastor, obviously now living with the Lord, was an easy decision for me. I chose Charles Spurgeon. And again, I went to seminary at Midwestern and Midwestern thinks a lot of Charles Spurgeon.

[ 2 : 58 ] They have his library, his books, and they've created a library, this beautiful room with all of his books. And up across the ceiling on the upper wall, there are portraits from his conversion all the way through his ministry towards his last days on earth.

In fact, in that room, they even have under glass something they call Spurgeon's vices. And inside is his cigar case with some cigars that were in his pocket when he died.

In the bookstore, they have Spurgeon cufflinks that you can buy. They also sell Spurgeon bobbleheads, which I have one.

You've heard me, if you've heard me preach, you've often heard me quote Charles Spurgeon. Because sometimes when I'm working on a sermon, I'll just think, I wonder what Spurgeon said about this, or if he's said anything about this.

One of my dogs is named Spurgeon, which is maybe taking things a little too far. But he's got black, curly, wavy hair, and he looks a lot like Charles Spurgeon.

[ 4 : 13 ] So why all this talk about Charles Spurgeon on Christmas Eve, and what does any of this have to do with Luke 2, 8 through 20? Well, I'll get there.

But years ago, I was approached by someone who was upset about how we had decorated our church building for Christmas.

In particular, they were upset about the Christmas trees. Apparently at that time, and maybe there was a time before, and maybe it's still going on, but there was a movement to expel Christmas trees from churches and homes because of their connection to some pagan festival from long, long ago. And this is the first time that I'd ever heard of such a thing. And so I decided to do some research on Christmas traditions and Christmas trees. And so one of the people that I turned to, I wonder, what has Charles Spurgeon said about any of this?

And I was surprised to find out that Spurgeon was somewhat of a grinch when it came to Christmas. Here's a few things that Spurgeon said about Christmas.

[ 5 : 25 ] He said, Certainly, we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmas. First, because we do not believe in the Mass at all, but abhor it, whether it be said or sung in Latin or in English.

And secondly, because we find no scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Savior. And consequently, its observance is a superstition because it is not of divine authority.

He also said, Well, bah humbug, Charles Spurgeon.

Or maybe we should say Charles Scrooge. Forget about trees. These quotes make it sound like Spurgeon wanted to do away with the celebration of Christmas altogether.

But as I dug deeper, I realized that Spurgeon wasn't so much against the celebration of Christmas as he was against the traditions associated with Christmas that overshadowed the gospel.

[ 6 : 40 ] At some point, Spurgeon's attitude towards Christmas must have changed. And I'm guessing that his wife, Susanna, probably had something to do with that.

Because later he would say things like this. God forbid I would be such a Puritan as to proclaim the annihilation of any day of rest which falls to the lot of the laboring man.

I wish there were a half dozen holidays in the year. And later on, he increased that number and he said, I wish there were 20 Christmas days in the year to which God's people would say, Amen.

Amen. Spurgeon would later celebrate Christmas with the orphans and the orphanage that he had created. He would do so by dressing up as Santa Claus.

And if you know Spurgeon and his appearance, he would have made a really good Santa Claus.

And he would go there and he would personally distribute gifts to the children there. Bottom line, Spurgeon eventually came to see Christmas as an opportunity to leverage the gospel.

[ 7 : 47 ] He saw Christmas eventually as a wonderful opportunity to share the good news of which he said was the grandest light in history. So Spurgeon was the deceased theologian.

And I attached myself to the living theologian that I've attached myself to is John MacArthur. And my second dog, Mac, is named after John MacArthur. As it pertains to Christmas, MacArthur said, and as it pertains to Christmas trees in particular, MacArthur said that one of his favorite Christmas traditions was to decorate the Christmas tree in his home with his family.

And he said, after all, God created trees and he created everything else. And his point was the same as Spurgeon's. Anything that is done, whether it's decorating a tree, whether it's giving gifts or any other tradition, if it's done with the purpose to express gratitude and gladness and thankfulness to the Lord, then it's a good thing.

But he also provided the admonition to not allow traditions and all the things that culture associates with Christmas to distract from the gospel and from our sharing the gospel.

On the first Christmas day, soon after our Savior was born, the angels, as glorious as they were, had an even more glorious message to share with common people.

[ 9 : 22 ] Their interaction with the shepherds on that first Christmas day reminds us of the main point of this morning's sermon, that Christmas proclaims the gospel.

Christmas proclaims the gospel. Christmas, I don't know about you, but I know for me as I've gotten older and as I've grown to know the Lord better, Christmas has a different and greater kind of significance to me.

As a kid, it was about the presence. As a younger man, I went through my Grinch stage where it was about not getting too carried away with all of the traditions. But today I've come to more fully appreciate how much God has blessed me.

And to just have my heart filled with gratitude for how good and how gracious God has been to me.

And that the joy, the true joy of Christmas is the realization that Christ was born. But that's not the end of his story.

[ 10 : 36 ] From a rustic manger to a rugged cross, Jesus died for sinners like you and me. He died to give me life.

He died to set me free from sin, giving me peace with God. God, I have good news that relieves me during the hardest times.

I have good news that brings me joy not just during this time of year, but at all times throughout the year. How about you?

It's amazing to think about. From a small field in Bethlehem, 2,000 years ago, the news of Christ's arrival has spread across the world.

God has saved millions of sinners. He's adopted them as his children. He's given them the gift of eternal life. And church, this is what Christmas is about.

[ 11 : 40 ] Christ has come. And what he came to do is good news. And it's good news for all people.

Christmas proclaims the gospel. So my hope this morning is that the Lord will use this scripture to proclaim the gospel to you.

And that your Christmas celebration will be Christ-centered and not self-centered. That the good news will bring you great joy.

That you will treasure this gospel in your heart. And that you will share it with those who need to hear it. When Spurgeon preached on this passage, he said, I wish everybody that keeps Christmas this year would keep it as the angels kept it.

Set an example to others how to behave on that day. And especially since the angels gave glory to God, let us do the same. And that's my hope this morning to give glory to God.

[ 12 : 42 ] As we look at this text, this passage that contains three realities about the gospel that Christmas proclaims. The first reality of the gospel that Christmas proclaims is that God seeks.

God seeks. Look at verses 8 and 9 with me again. Now, the Bible commands human beings to pursue God and promises that when they do, they will find him.

Jeremiah 29, 13. But it also tells us that God is the initiator of those spiritual pursuits.

Romans 3, 10 through 12, we read, As it is written, none is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside.

Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. If you read the Bible, you see from the very beginning, God is the seeker.

[ 13 : 58 ] God has sought us. After Adam and Eve sinned, they did not turn toward God. They did not ask for his help. They ran away from God.

God didn't hide from them when they sinned. They hid from God because they sinned. It was God who sought them in the garden. It was God who called out to them.

God was the first missionary, the creator seeking out his lost creatures, that they would be reconciled to him. Jesus used parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin in Luke chapter 15 to teach that God is the one who seeks us.

In Luke 19, we see how Jesus sought Zacchaeus. Remember, he saw him up in the sycamore tree. He called him down. And Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house.

Zacchaeus was a despised tax collector. People in his community hated him. They saw him as a traitor. How dare Jesus visit with such a vile sinner?

[ 15 : 10 ] They grumbled. But Zacchaeus was saved through his meeting with Jesus. And he was radically transformed by meeting Jesus Christ.

And Jesus concluded his time with Zacchaeus with a simple statement that captured his mission on earth. In Luke 19, 10, Jesus said, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Jesus often compared himself in his ministry to a shepherd. He's the shepherd who leaves the 99 in his flock as he goes out searching for the one who is lost.

In John 10, Jesus says he is the good shepherd who gathers and who guides and who gives his life to save his sheep.

The Old Testament is likewise replete with imagery of shepherding, which God used to describe his relationship with his people. The one we probably are most familiar with is Psalm 23.

[ 16 : 16 ] It illustrates how the Lord leads his people to green pastures and to quiet waters. How he nourishes their souls.

He's the one who guides them, who walks alongside of them, who comforts them with a shepherd's staff as they walk through the dark valley engulfed in the shadow of death.

He brings them through and he brings them safely to his house. The house of the Lord where they will dwell in the love, peace, and security of the good shepherd forever.

So it's fitting that God chose shepherds to receive the good news of the Savior's birth before anyone else.

But it was a surprising choice as far as the world was concerned. If Jesus' birth had been part of a humanly planned public relations campaign, it would have been handled very differently.

[ 17 : 22 ] The target audience would be the rich and the powerful and the influential. If sinful men were given that task to launch the birth of the Savior, I think they might do something like this, wondering, you know, can we get Taylor Swift involved somehow?

Maybe her and Travis Kelsey can make some kind of announcement and post it on social media. I'm a Chiefs fan and I like Travis Kelsey, but even I am tired of seeing Travis Kelsey in commercials, my gracious.

But that would be the attitude. We need to flood the airways. We need to put together a post or something that goes viral across the Internet. We need to get the most influential people involved and behind Jesus if his ministry is going to be successful.

The most influential people in Israel during the time of Jesus' birth were the high priests, the Levites, the scribes, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees.

These were the kinds of people you would expect God to seek and to deliver such important news to.

[ 18 : 29 ] It seems to make sense. Again, if worldly thinking here, if we want Jesus' ministry to be successful, he needs the support of the religious elite in our society.

But God had other plans. Instead, he chose to reveal this glorious news to members of the lowest class in Jewish society.

Shepherds were, at this time, uneducated, unskilled, and often unsavory people. Shepherds were viewed as being unreliable and dishonest.

As a matter of fact, they were not allowed to give any kind of testimony in court. Because people just viewed them as being untrustworthy. People didn't trust them.

And they thought they were unclean. Sheep required care seven days a week. So shepherds weren't able to fully comply with the man-made Sabbath regulations that the Pharisees had developed.

[ 19 : 35 ] Thus, they were viewed as being in continual violation of the religious laws. And so, in the eyes of their society, they were both physically and spiritually dirty people.

Luke says, These particular shepherds were watching their sheep in the region around Bethlehem, which was about six miles south of Jerusalem.

And that's interesting, because according to rabbinic law back then, sheep were to be kept in the wilderness, and any animal found between Jerusalem and Bethlehem was subject to being used as a sacrifice in the temple.

So it may have been the case that the sheep, these particular shepherds were watching, were to be dedicated for use in the temple as sacrifices, which would be pretty ironic.

The religious leaders of Israel probably placed higher value on the sheep. The shepherds were watching than the shepherds themselves, who were created in God's image.

[ 20 : 51 ] By sending His angels to the shepherds first, with the announcement that His Son had been born, God communicates a couple of important principles to us.

First, which we've gone over, is that He is the initiator. He seeks us in salvation. The second is that He seeks the lowly.

He seeks the poor and the depraved. He seeks the people that people don't care about. And He desires to lavish the riches of His grace upon them.

And He does that to them. He desires to do that for all of us. How wonderful is God? We can get so caught up in our traditions and religious activities that we forget that God still seeks.

And those whom He seeks to save may be people we least expect Him to, or those people we least desire for Him to save.

[ 22 : 09 ] But God, through Christ, has made a way for all sinners to be saved. God's loving pursuit of us involves His sending His beloved Son to die in our place.

Because we could not reach Him through our own efforts, He is the one who, in seeking us, has reached down to us. And Christmas proclaims the gospel.

It's the reality of good news. And God intends it to be shared with all people.

That's the first reality. God seeks. The second is that God saves. Now, it's hard to imagine how the shepherds felt when the darkened field they occupied was suddenly illuminated with the glory of God.

You know, the best I can do to try to imagine it is to think of the sudden terror I've felt in seeing the reflection of police lights in my rearview mirror.

[ 23 : 18 ] You know what I'm talking about? Oh, no. What have I done? Maybe I'll turn over to this lane and they'll keep going. Nope, they're following me. I'm in trouble. For someone else, for somebody it might be like, you know, you're just a little bit tired in church and you're dozing off and you get that elbow to the rib and suddenly you're startled and you're awake, whereas you were not before.

For a student, it might be like whenever you're in class and you're daydreaming or doodling and all of a sudden the teacher calls your name to give an answer. Oh, my goodness. I wasn't expecting that.

Startled. Shocked. Surprised. The shepherds were certainly startled and shocked as the Lord's glory alerted them to the presence of a heavenly messenger.

As was the case with Mary and as was the case with other people in Scripture, the shepherds were terrified when they saw the angel. But the news the angel was sent by God to give to these men would bring them and would eventually bring millions of others great joy.

Verses 10 through 11. The angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

[ 24 : 47 ] So having reassured the stunned and frightened shepherds that he came bearing good news, the angel provided details that describe the one whom the good news was about.

The angel said he is Savior, he is Christ, and he is Lord. And these are details that cannot be skipped over because it's these details that make the gospel good news.

Jesus is Savior. He is the Savior we all need. He saves us from our sins. He saves us from the wrath of God. He rescues us from hell.

This is the kind of peace that he brings. Too often Jesus is presented as like a therapist or a counselor. Someone to help you find meaning in life.

Someone who will mend your broken relationships. Someone who can help you kick a bad habit. Jesus can't help you with all of those things.

[ 25 : 58 ] But those things are a byproduct of the ultimate problem that we all have. And that's the problem of sin. The gospel is the message that Jesus is the Savior who rescues sinful people from the consequences of their sin.

And he frees them from the penalty of it by dying on the cross in their place. Jesus is Savior.

Jesus is Christ. Christ is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew Messiah. Both mean anointed one. Christ is not Jesus' last name.

It's his title. He is the one who came to fulfill God's promises. The one sent to deliver God's people from their sin. The one anointed to serve forever as prophet, priest, and king.

The one in whom there is life and whose life is the light of men. He is truly God. He is truly man. He is Emmanuel. God with us. Born to die as an atoning sacrifice and dying to rise on the third day that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

[ 27 : 17 ] Jesus is Lord. He's not your personal assistant or genie to command. He is Lord. He is Lord of all. Sovereign ruler of the universe and all that is in it.

He is the one who made and who holds all things together. You know, I can appreciate the sentiment behind Carrie Underwood's song, Jesus Take the Wheel.

You familiar with that song? I won't sing it for you. I can understand where she's coming from, but look, the Lord of lords, the one who is savior and ruler and Lord of all and king of kings, he does not need your permission to take the wheel from your hands.

You obey him because you love him and you love him because you know how much he first loved you.

When he sought you, when he found you, when he saved you, when he gave you eternal life, sealing you with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that the good work he began in you, it will reach its completion when he glorifies you as he is glorified.

[ 28 : 41 ] Jesus is the Lord. Jesus is the boss. During the week, I'll often go in the morning to get my coffee from Quick Trip over here and there's a guy who works behind the counter I like and I like him because I'll bring up my coffee and he'll say, hey, good morning, boss.

You need anything else, boss? And you know, I like being called the boss. And I think we all do, don't we?

There used to be a show on TV growing up called Who's the Boss? You remember that show? Is it the lady who owns the house? Is it the butler, the manservant who lives in the house and runs the house?

We don't know. Who's the boss? But when it comes to your life, when it comes to our church, Jesus is the boss.

He is our Savior. He is the Christ, our Messiah. He's Lord. The angel continued with more details about this divine child in verse 12.

[ 29 : 50 ] He said, and this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. I don't know if the shepherds had time to process all these things that they had just heard before the sky erupted with even more angels, but certainly at some point, either on their way to see Jesus in the manger or afterward, as they were going back to their field, they must have been thrilled by the news that God was willing to so closely identify with people like them that God would be willing to stoop so low for people like them.

And after giving the shepherds the sign, verse 13 says, and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.

How many angels were there? A whole bunch. A whole lot. I think if you were an angel on this day, this is the assignment that you would have wanted to receive from God.

The angels knew. They knew Jesus as the eternal second person of the Trinity before his incarnation. They understood that the fall had transformed the human race into sinful rebels against God, their creator.

They also knew that God had provided, was providing a way for them to be saved. Jesus said in Luke 15, 10, just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

[ 31 : 42 ] So imagine the joy they must have felt and had this privilege from God to be the ones to make this announcement.

Collectively, they proclaimed in verse 14, glory to God in the highest and on earth among those with whom he is pleased. Christ. You see, the ultimate goal of both angelic and human existence is to proclaim and to dwell, to bask in the glorious reality of who God is and what God has done.

The proclamation of the gospel, the proclamation of Christmas is that through Christ, God and sinners can be reconciled by assuming a human nature.

The God-man bridges the chasm. He dies for our sins. He heals the breach and makes peace. Christmas proclaims the gospel.

And if God has sought you and if God has saved you, he's called you to participate in his rescue mission by sending those whom he's saved to those who have yet to hear and receive this good news, which brings us to the third reality about Christmas and the gospel, how it proclaims the gospel, that God sends.

[ 33 : 13 ] God seeks, God saves, God sends. Verse 15, When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

Romans 10, 17 says, So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. See, the shepherds heard this great news.

They heard the gospel and they heard it well. And we know that they heard it well because of their subsequent actions. They were eager to obey. They were eager to go to the place where the angels said that they could find the Savior.

And they were eager to go with the good news that they had received and to share it with Mary and Joseph. I wish I was as good a listener as these shepherds were.

And I'm sure that as I confess that, my wife, Dani, is probably saying amen in her mind. Because I'll often ask Dani about something that she's already told me about.

[ 34 : 25 ] Any men have that problem? Okay? Shame on you leaving me here to confess all by myself. But I'll say, I'll ask her something and she'll say, I already told you.

Weren't you listening? And then I'll kind of get into defense attorney mode and I'll say, well, you know, yes, I mean, I do recall now being there and present and I didn't have my hands over my ears like this, so in a way I was listening.

But no, I wasn't really hearing you. I wasn't really hearing what you said and absorbing that. I don't know about you, I have that problem also at times when I read God's Word.

You ever have that problem? Now, I was convicted this past week on Wednesday morning as I was getting ready to, as I sat down on my desk and as I pulled out my Bible, I knew I still had a lot of work to do on this sermon.

And I pulled out my little checklist, my little read the Bible in a year plan. Some of you have that. So I checked the first couple of passages and in my mind I'm thinking, okay, you know, still about the work that I have left to do.

[ 35 : 42 ] And then I read Acts chapter 20 where the Apostle Paul is meeting with the Ephesian elders on his way to Jerusalem, his way back there. And he knows, the Holy Spirit has told him, you're going to go back there and you're going to suffer.

But he goes because he's obedient to God's will. And he knows what's in store for him. And in verse 24, look at what the Apostle Paul says to the elders of Ephesus.

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself if only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

God got my attention with that verse. And it was like, oh yeah, this is what it's all about. my preaching, my pastoring, my work on my dissertation, my life is to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

The good news of the gospel is news that's meant to be shared. And God has sent us, he's commanding us, calling us to go and to share this good news.

[ 37 : 17 ] Look again at verses 16 and 19. That's what the shepherds do. They went with haste. They were in a hurry. Let's get there. We can't wait to see what we're going to find and to share what we've seen.

They went with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. Now, those who best share the gospel are those who obey God's instruction to go and to share the good news.

They are those who, like Mary, who stop and who take time to treasure and ponder over the wonderful things of God, to meditate on how good God is, to think about how great the message of the gospel is.

How often do you do that? Mary knew who her son was. She had already been told. He is the Savior.

[ 38 : 34 ] He is the Messiah. She didn't know all that that would mean, but she knew He was very, very, very special. But hearing the same things from other people increased her joy.

The gospel is like that. For those who receive it, it brings joy initially, doesn't it? But then, as you grow to know the Lord better, and to know His grace and His love and His goodness, your love for Him deepens and it grows.

It becomes more full as you realize God's grace to save you, a sinner. And you become more aware of how great of a recipient of His grace that God has made you to be.

Eventually, the shepherds returned to their fields, but they returned transformed in verse 20. And as the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they heard and seen as it had been told them.

You know, the same attitude of these shepherds should characterize all who have heard and received the gospel.

[ 39 : 59 ] It should characterize all who know and love the Lord. And we all should be eager to participate in our Lord's divine rescue mission as He commanded us with these words in Matthew 1 before He ascended back into heaven.

Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. You see, the gospel isn't good advice. It's good news that transforms people's lives, that saves sinners, that brings the dead to life.

And those whom God has sought and those whom God has saved, He sends. And so how should we adjust our lives according to this text? Well, proclaim the gospel in every season.

Not just during the Christmas season, but every season. Certainly, Christmas gives us, I think, even more opportunity to share the gospel with others. But look, there's always opportunity to share the gospel no matter what time of year it is.

[ 41 : 23 ] I want to close with one more thing that Spurgeon said about Christmas. And this was his challenge to his church, you know, 100, 200 years ago. And I want to read it to you, and I hope it will be a challenge to you as well as we celebrate Christmas tomorrow.

He said, when you are at home on Christmas Day, let no one see your face till God has seen it. Be up in the morning.

Wrestle with God. And if your friends are not converted, wrestle with God for them. And then you will find it easy work to wrestle with them for God. Seek if you can to get them one by one and tell them the story.

Do not be afraid. Only think of the good you may possibly do. Remember, he that saves a soul from death hath covered a multitude of sins and he shall have stars in his crown forever and ever.

Seek to be under God. Saviors in your family. Be the means of leading your own beloved brethren and sisters to seek and find the Lord Jesus Christ. And then one day when you shall meet in paradise, it will be a joy and blessedness to think that you are there and that your friends are there too whom God will have made you the instrument of saving.

[ 42 : 47 ] Let your reliance in the Holy Spirit be entire and honest. Trust not yourself. He can give you words. He can apply those words to their heart and so enable you to minister grace to the hearers.

So my challenge for you and for us as a church is that our Christmas will be Christ-centered and that as we go into 2024 that we will all collectively make a greater effort to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

One application question for you to look at at some point in time today, this week. Just think about you as a believer.

How did God seek you? How did He save you? Just remember that. How God sought you. How He was gracious to save you.

He sent somebody to you. And then the follow-up with that question is you be that somebody. Who is someone God is sending you to share the gospel with?

[ 43 : 58 ] And I pray that you will be praying for that person and be seeking that opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them.

Will you bow your heads with me and let's pray. Lord, we thank You for Christmas. We thank You for the reason that You've given us to celebrate.

We thank You, Lord, for all the ways that You have blessed us. So many ways, Lord, that we take for granted. God, I pray that for all of us You would cause us to pause to reflect over how gracious You've been to seek us and to save us.

How gracious You've been to include us, to give us the privilege to be sent by You like the angels were sent by You to those shepherds in that field with the good news that Christ has come and with the good news of what Christ has done.

God, I pray for each and every one of us that as we leave from this place and we go into some of those traditions that we have with family and friends that You would be at the center of all of that.

[ 45 : 21 ] That in the joy that will come over the next hours and the rest of this day and tomorrow, that that joy would be centered on Christ, that we would think about how much You've blessed us with the people that You've surrounded us with, the people that You have brought into our lives, and that, Lord, ultimately all of it, we pray, would just be a celebration of You and the gift that You've given us in Jesus Christ, Your Son, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen.