

DECEMBER 20, 2020; ADVENT 4; SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
(50% seating capacity for COVID rules)
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

WELCOME AND PRAYER: Pastor Tom Olson

HYMN #21 “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

READING: Luke 2:1, 3, 4-7

SONG: Pastor Mark Antal & Ray Holmberg, “Birthday of a King”

READING: Luke 2:15-16

READING: Matthew 2:1, 2, 9-10

SS SONG: “O Come Let Us Adore Him”

READING: Matthew 2:11

SS SONG: “Away in a Manger”

POEM: “Daily Peace”

HYMN: “O Worship the King”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHT 4TH ADVENT CANDLE

SONG: “Mary’s Boy Child” Phil & Robin Johnson

SERMON: Pastor Tom Olson

MEGA FEAR & MEGA JOY

Pastor Tom Olson; December 18, 2020

Luke 2:8-10 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 shown around them, and the glory of the Lord shown around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel of said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

GREEK: Jacob O’Flanagan and I have been studying Luke 2 in the original Greek together a couple of evenings this last month. It is a good way to study the Scriptures because God chose to write the New Testament in Greek. As we did this, I noticed some repeated words that kind of jumped off of the page at me. One of these words is both Greek and English. The word is an adjective in both languages. It is the word MEGA, meaning “great.” The two “MEGAS” are found in verses 9 & 10 of Luke 2. In verse 9 we see the disciples being

frightened with MEGA FEAR. In English we would say they were not merely frightened but were TERRIFIED. Then in verse 10 there is another great contrast. After the angel tells the shepherds not to be afraid, he tells them that he is here to announce to them that he has “good news of MEGA JOY.” I see in these two verses what is desperately needed for our world today...a world of MEGA FEAR that needs “good news of MEGA JOY.”

I. THE SHEPHERDS HAD MEGA FEAR

ROUGHNECKS: Here we have the shepherds out in the fields at night keeping watch over their flocks. These are very brave souls who are used to defending their sheep from wild animals in the darkness of night. If anyone in the world would be unafraid of the terrors of the night, it would be these shepherds. But when the angel of the Lord appeared to them, they got double MEGA terrified. I have often said that it is good that we cannot generally see angels or demons and the invisible spiritual realm around us, because we would be terrified. I think I have seen angels but only disguised in human form...only to realize later that they were angels.

REALITY: MEGA FEAR is nothing new. My hair turned white when I was a pilot in Alaska having had some frightening experiences with landing, flying in the mountains, turbulence and other close calls. Cancer didn't cause me fear. Even though I personally am not afraid of THE VIRUS, I know that it has many people extremely terrified. Some people are afraid of losing their finances, or health or a loved one. There was a point in my life I was literally terrified that I would die and burn in hell because of my sins. It is not unusual today to hear of people who are crippled by fear. This fear causes us to isolate, or to force people to live with such cautions that it is stifling. This is not healthy. **2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.** Healthy caution is fine, but a spirit of fear steals our joy, causes us to react and make poor choices and takes away our ability to love others.

PERSONAL: What is the driving force in your life? Is it fear or is it the power, love and self-control God gives you? We could summarize those three words into one: wisdom. How you make choices? Fear or wisdom? I personally don't want to be ruled by fear but instead to be ruled by wisdom and live by faith in the promises of God.

II. THE ANGEL ANNOUNCED MEGA JOY

ANTIDOTE: What is the antidote of fear? What clears away the dark clouds of fear and lets the brilliant sunshine and blue skies of faith to appear in our lives? It is exactly what the angel said, “...***I bring you good news of MEGA joy...***” Last week we were reminded how powerful the force of joy is in our lives. **1 Thessalonians 5:16 “Be joyful always...” Nehemiah 8:10 “...the joy of the Lord is your strength.”** Those poor shepherds needed some joy. The Roman government that ruled them was cruel and terrifying. The local “King Herod” was mentally unstable and frightening. The leaders of the temple were in cahoots with Rome and terribly corrupt. Life was downright hard and oppressive. So these most lowly “bottom of the run” of social class shepherds were the first to receive good news of MEGA joy.

HEADLINE: Note the pronoun YOU in the next verse, “***For unto YOU, is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.***” This is what makes the Christian CHRISTMAS so much more meaningful than the secular counter part called “THE HOLIDAYS.” The message of CHRIST-MAS is CHRIST. The prophecy has been fulfilled, a Savior is born, He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and He will come back some day soon and set things right! That is good news. JESUS IS LORD. That is the political headline of the ages. Caesar, earthy Kings and presidents, are

temporary. Jesus reigns forever. Peace has come to earth in Christ. If He is Lord of our hearts and homes, there will be MEGA joy there as well.

REJOICE: Some people get down about politics. But that is not good. The song puts it so well, ***“Rejoice the Lord is King, your Lord and King adore. Rejoice, give thanks and sing and triumph evermore. Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!”***

Several years ago, we used to sing a song that tells about a person being tired of the wrong focus and making the decision to trade their sin and sorrow in for the joy of the Lord...”I’m trading my sickness, I’m trading my sadness, I’m trading my sorrow for the JOY OF THE LORD...yes, Lord, yes, Lord, yes, Lord, yes, Amen!” Are you tired of living in fear? Trade that fear into God for the joy of the Lord. How? ...come to Bethlehem, look into the manger and you will find your answer in the face of a baby. Amen

SONG: Pillman Family

PRAYER FOR ECUADOR: SS Children

HYMN #28 vss 1&4 “I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve”

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson