

THE MOST COMMON WORDS OF CHRISTMAS

Matt 1:20; Luke 1:13, 30; Luke 2:10

December 15, 2013

INTRODUCTION

a. The children always do a great job in getting us to the real meaning of Christmas and I want to thank them for doing it again this morning.

b. **In announcing the birth of His Son, the Messiah, God uses two words most often, "Fear Not"**

c. Trouble is that we all live with fears - some are rational and some are not

1. In the Christmas Story the threat of Herod to Jesus was real and Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with Jesus

2. Some fears have no basis in reality but paralyze us just the same

d. Max Lucado has written - *"Satan's modus operandi is fear. To manipulate you with the mysterious, to taunt you with the unknown. Fear of death, fear of failure, fear of God, fear of tomorrow-his arsenal is vast. His goal? To create cowardly, joyless souls. He doesn't want you to make the journey to the mountain. He figures if he can rattle you enough, you will take your eyes off the peaks and settle for a dull existence in the flatlands."*

e. Does fear have you in its grip? At times we all are in its grip

f. Today I want us to hear again the words that are most common to the announcement of the first Christmas.

1. Those words are **"FEAR NOT"**

2. I believe this simple message can set us free by bringing us to faith

I. GOD SPEAKS TO FEARFUL PEOPLE

a. **Zechariah** - An aging priest with no son to carry on the work. A real sign of God's disfavor was to be childless and especially without a son. In his senior years he is afraid - He has prayed for years for a son - God has not answered - Can a priest pray and not be heard - What must the people think? Some preacher - God won't even answer his prayers -

1. **He is afraid** to die without an heir - Afraid that he has been a failure and God is punishing him

2. Zechariah lives in the grip of fear

3. **To Zechariah - Luke 1:13** - *But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John."*

a. **God had heard him all along** and answered him when it would honor God the most - A son who would prepare the way for the Messiah

b. God saw clearly what Zechariah could not see

c. Zechariah's fears were dispelled by the words of the angel and the action of God

b. **Mary** - a young girl - just promised in marriage to Joseph - For Mary her life could not be much better - Joseph is a good man who has promised to love her and keep her for all of life ahead - She quietly thanks God every day for His provision for her - Now she, a virgin, is expecting God's Son - What will Joseph think - The entire village knows she is engaged - The disgrace that will come - the "cat calls" and names that will be thrown at her - What will Joseph do

1. **Mary is afraid** - She has done nothing wrong but is unmarried and pregnant - The criticism will be great - she may lose Joseph

2. **To Mary - Luke 1:30** - *"But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God."*

a. **Mary was encouraged and strengthened by knowing that she was in God's favor.** Regardless of her circumstances she knew that to be faithful to God would vindicate her

b. Those who have been scorned and scoffed at falsely can understand the magnitude of the angel's words to her - "FEAR NOT" and those words are for you, too

c. **Joseph** - A hard working young man - well respected in the village and engaged to a wonderful girl who says she is expecting God's Son - He can save his reputation by divorcing Mary - What will the people think - what will this decision do to his business - after all moral values are very important in this village - Will Mary ever love him really - can he really love her - Is her story true or not - He wants to believe her

1. **Joseph is afraid** - his dreams have just been dashed and he may be the point of public ridicule

2. **To Joseph - Matthew 1:20** - *"But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."*

a. **Can you imagine the relief that came to Joseph's heart - Mary was pure and truthful - God was using them in a special way**

b. **A new fear probably came when Joseph understood that he was being called on to raise God's Son**

c. *A young soldier who was fighting in Italy during World War II jumped into a foxhole just ahead of some bullets. He immediately tried to deepen the hole for more protection and was frantically scraping away the dirt with his hands. He unearthed something metal and brought up a silver crucifix, left by a former resident of the foxhole. A moment later another leaping figure landed beside him as the shells screamed overhead. When the soldier got a chance to look, he saw that his new companion was an army chaplain. Holding out the crucifix, the soldier gasped, "Am I glad to see you! How do you work this thing?"*

d. **The Shepherds** - These men faces many dangers every day as they protected the sheep from predators - armed with a sling and staff at most - These were not skittish men but rather men of great courage - yet on that one night when the unexpected and unexplained light and voice came to them from the sky they were frozen in fear

1. **The shepherds were fearful** of what they didn't understand and what they could not explain

2. **The Shepherds - Luke 2:10** - *"but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone!"*

a. **In the middle of the unexplained and unknown God says - Do not be afraid** - There is Good News - A Savior is Born -

b. Every concern they had was taken away in those words - What a night it must have been - What a message to receive

II. GOD SPEAKS TO YOUR FEARS

a. **What fears did you bring with you today**

1. Losing your job - very real in this part of Michigan

2. Dying

3. Losing a family member - spouse, child, parent or bro/sis

a. Many of you know that I have been in WV this week taking care of my mom. She was hospitalized and the last few months have been challenging. It is difficult not to be fearful and so these words are for me today

b. We celebrated Ray Davis' life yesterday and these words are for his family, too

4. Being alone

5. Never being forgiven

6. Divorce

b. **God speaks clearly today** and says to each of us - **"Fear Not"**

1. I will provide for you - Trust me

2. **Jeremiah 29:11** - *"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

3. **Hebrews 13:5**, *"I will never leave you or forsake you"*

c. **The Greatest News Ever Announced is Still This - A Savior is Born**

d. It is the news that dispels all fears

1. Fear knocks at the door of our heart - Faith answers - No One is there.

e. "the angel reassured them. "Fear not!" he said. "I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! A Savior has been born..."

1. **Hear again the most common words of Christmas – Fear Not, Do not be afraid**

BOW WITH ME IN PRAYER

8:30 #127 "THOU DIDST LEAVE THY THRONE"

11:00 "JOY TO THE WORLD"