

## ***Luke 2:8-11 – Jesus rescues, Jesus rules***

### **Introduction**

It's always nice to hear news of a newly born baby. In the 5pm congregation we've had two new babies born over the past week or two. Last week I had the pleasure of announcing the arrivals of little Wesley Thomas, born to Brad and Crystal and little Joshua Wort, born to Phil and Kate.

And, with the announcement of a new baby, we of course want to know the details: How much did they weigh? How long are they? What time was the birth? What's the status of mum and bub?

These details are important to us because they give us the first little picture into who this new baby is. That's why it's a great source of irritation to my wife when I forget key details of a new baby announcement.

Well in our passage today God, through his angel, announces the birth of the new baby, Jesus. But the details God gives us about his birth, is not so much height and length, but mission and identity. God, in his announcement lets us know what this baby has come to do, and who He truly is.

And if we take the next 20 minutes to listen to the details God's announcement of the baby Jesus, we will actually discover what Christmas is truly about, why it's so important and what it means for each one of us.

And my pray for tonight is that we will take the details of God's announcement of Jesus birth to heart. You see it's nice to hear and remember the details of baby Wesley or Joshua, but it's life-saving to hear, remember and accept the details of baby Jesus at Christmas.

So let me read again, the announcement of God to the shepherds in verses 10-11 of Luke chapter 2 that I want to focus on tonight:

*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 Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."*

In announcing Jesus' birth to the shepherds God makes two important details about Christmas known to us. Christmas is about ***Jesus being the saviour who rescues [His mission] and Jesus being the King who rules [His identity]***.

They are the two details I want to think about tonight.

***Firstly, Christmas is about Jesus being the saviour who rescues.***

I don't know if you've ever thought of Christmas as a rescue mission before, but that's actually what it is. Think about what the angel says to the shepherds: "*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour.*"

On that very first Christmas night (the one we've been singing about), God sent us a *Saviour* or rescuer. Now if God sends us a rescuer that suggests that we

need to be rescued. And some of you might be thinking, “why does God think we need rescuing?”

Well, God’s word tells us that we’ve all turned our backs on God, we haven’t acknowledged that He has any real rights over us. We haven’t loved him or others the way we calls us to. We might *believe* in God, but we just don’t want Him to be God over us. In many ways we like ruling our own life without God interfering.

But here’s the problem and our predicament. When we reject God’s good rule over us, we reject the life and loving care that is found in relationship with him. But we also stand ***condemned*** for our rebellion against him and face His just judgment of death and Hell.

And, you see, we can’t rescue ourselves from this judgment. No amount of good rituals, good deeds or good intentions will get us out of this problem with God – the offense of our ignoring and rejecting the Holy God is too big. If we are going to be rescued, God Himself has to pull it off. And, amazingly, that what He does for us at Christmas - the baby Jesus in that manger was not born to simply be a good role model for us, nor a good teacher who can give us life advice. He was born to be our ***rescuer***. Sent by God to save us from the wrath of God.

We go on to read in the gospels that Jesus grew up to be a man. He showed that He was also the Son of God (and worth listening to) by healing the sick, casting out demons, controlling the wind and the waves, raising the dead and forgiving sins. But it was actually through his death on a cross that Jesus accomplished His

rescue mission, because at the cross Jesus finally and completely dealt with our problem of sin. He took on Himself the punishment we deserve for our rejection of God. Instead of hostility which marked our relationship with God, now there is peace as the angels say a little later in verse 14. We can now be forgiven by God and accepted by Him forever through faith in Jesus and what he did at the cross. That's how we are rescued.

Our rescue by Jesus is a little bit like this – imagine your at the beach, the two flags have been set up by the lifesaver to mark out the safe place to swim. As you head into the water, the lifesaver says to you – just remember mate, keep between the flags and you'll be right. Go outside the flags and you'll end up in trouble. So you go in, and for a while, you do what the lifesaver says – you keep between the flags, but then you notice that the water outside the flags looks pretty good – not too many people there – good waves. So you think why not, that lifesaver, I reckon he's probably just out to spoil my fun. And so you start swimming outside the flags. But about ten meters outside the flags you suddenly get caught in a rip – it starts taking you out to sea – no one sees you go. You try swimming against it – but it's no use. You only tire yourself out and become completely exhausted. Your situation is hopeless – you're as good as dead. And then it hits you. There is one hope left. And it's found in the very person ***you've chosen ignore***. The lifesaver. And so, in humble desperation you throw up your hand and call out to him hoping that he sees you with his binoculars. He does see you – and thankfully he rushes in and saves you.

The God you and I have refused to listen to and chosen to ignore is the very one who comes to rescue us in his Son Jesus. Jesus, at the time of his birth, was also referred to as Immanuel (Matt 1:23), which means “God with us” – God coming into the rough seas of our world to rescue helpless sinners who had rejected Him. But Jesus not only put his life in danger, He willingly gave it up for sinners. We don’t deserve to be rescued, but God the Son (Jesus) is a good and gracious lifesaver. He is merciful to those who have rebelled against God and promises to always rescue those who call out to Him. That is why Christmas is good news of great joy – because we have a lifesaver!

*Christmas is about Jesus being the saviour who rescues.*

***Secondly, God’s announcement to the shepherds tells us that Christmas is about Jesus being the king who rules.***

The angel of the Lord not only call him a “*a Saviour*”, but a *saviour who is* [verse 11] ***Christ the Lord.***”

Sometimes people think that Christ is Jesus’ surname (Jesus Christ, John Smith)– but Christ is not a surname – as one writer put it, it’s more like a job description. Kind of like saying “Bob the electrician.” The word ‘Christ’ actually means ‘anointed one’ – who gets anointed? If you’ve watched the first series of the crown – you’ll know that Queens and Kings get anointed.

In calling Him ‘Christ the Lord’ God makes it known to these shepherds that the baby Jesus is to be King and ruler over God’s world. This again, shows us why

Christmas is SO important. It reminds us that there *is* someone in charge of the world. And we see this made clear in the rest of the NT story. After Jesus had died for his people on the cross to rescue them, God raised him to life, seated Him on His throne in Heaven, and made Him ruler and ultimate judge of us all. The angel is reminding us that we need to have a big view of this little baby.

There's a lot of focus on the ***baby*** Jesus at this time of year. You see pictures of him on cards and in shop windows. And sometimes these cute little pictures of Jesus elicit what can be referred to as the awwww factor. We see Him and go awww. Well, God's message reminds us that we should move from an awww factor to an Awe factor (AWE) – where we see Jesus as the mighty ruler He came to be and remains today.

Jesus still lives and rules as God's king today and one day God tells us that we will all come before Him and have to give an account of our lives (which is a kind of scary if we're willing to be brutally honest about ourselves). And that's why it's important that on that day we don't just meet King Jesus as our judge but also our saviour.

Believe it or not, Christmas can be **bad news** of **no joy** for those who continue to reject or ignore God's king and saviour, Jesus. But for those who acknowledge Jesus as their Saviour and King Christmas truly is as the angels say "***good news*** of ***great joy.***"

Christmas is about ***Jesus being the saviour who rescues and the King who rules.***

### ***Conclusion***

Well I don't know if you think it strange that God would choose to announce the birth of His Saviour King to regular joe shepherds. I mean, the angel could've been sent to the rulers and people of influence in Jerusalem, but instead God chose to start giving his life-saving announcement to no-name shepherds in a field.

And I think that shows you how committed God is to bringing this good news of great joy to *all* people (as verse 10 says). These shepherds may have been unknown and hidden away from the rest of society, but God saw them out there, and He loved them and He told them of the one who could save them. Perhaps you feel a little like those shepherds, maybe a little forgotten by others this Christmas, not very important, stuck in a job you don't love, but God sees you this Christmas, He loves you, and tonight through His word, He has made known the life-saving message of Jesus to you too.

So, if you're not yet a follower of Jesus, why not make this Christmas the best one yet by trusting in Jesus for forgiveness and bowing the knee to him as *your* good saviour King.

But if you do know Jesus, then let me encourage you to keep making the main thing the main thing this Christmas. It's only when we keep coming back to

God's message that Jesus has come to us our saviour king that we will remember that Christmas truly is good news of great joy for *us*.

I've been reminded of this over the past week, as my family has felt the disappointment of Christmas plans disrupted because of the Sydney Covid clusters. My brother and his family were supposed to fly down from Sydney and spend Christmas with us, but then had to abandon their plans due to new restrictions. And perhaps some of you are having similar disappointing experiences this Christmas season.

When Christmas plans get disrupted it *is* disappointing. The joy of Christmas kind of gets sucked out. But my brother himself reminded our family this week, how the good news of Jesus is the antidote to the bad news disrupted plans. My brother wrote on our family whatsapp:

*"We're very disappointed not to be coming. Lots of tears today. Covid is being a real grinch! It's a good reminder that Christmas is about Jesus and we can celebrate that where ever we are."*

And that's what I needed to be reminded of this week. That as followers of Jesus we still have a reason to celebrate and give thanks even amidst our tears of disappointment when our Christmas plans don't go the way we want them to. Which is always the very real risk.



Christian hope isn't bound up in the experience of Christmas day but in the substance of the Christmas message – which is Jesus.

For Christmas tells us that Christ **has** come and rescued us from sin through this death on the cross – We are now forgiven and have peace with God – no longer standing condemned. And Christmas tells us that Christ came as King, God raised Him from the dead and now He **rules** the world and will one day welcome us into His heavenly kingdom to live **together** as His people. No more disappointment, no more Covid, just peace, safety and happiness forever.

***Jesus has come to us as the saviour who rescues and the King who rules. So let's cling to that good news of great Joy this Christmas.***

Let's pray.