

Note: The sermon below will be delivered by the Rev. Caleb Kim on Sunday, December 24, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fenelon Falls.

Title: Good News of Great Joy for All the People

This time of year, many media outlets share their top stories of 2024. As we reflect on these reports, we may notice that much of the news is negative, with only a few positive highlights. Even those good stories can bring mixed feelings. For example, when Donald Trump was re-elected President of the United States in November, many of his supporters celebrated, while Kamala Harris and her followers were deeply disappointed. Similarly, many economists predict that our currency may continue to decline in the coming days. When the Canadian dollar was stronger than the U.S. dollar in the past, Canadian consumers were pleased to purchase products from the United States. However, this same situation created challenges for Canadian businesspeople selling goods to American customers. These examples remind us that the events of this world often bring relative happiness, depending on our interests and circumstances. But is there any news that is truly good for everyone?

In the sacred passage for this evening, the author of Luke's Gospel shares good news that is universal and personal: "Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). This is a message of great joy for all people-across nations, generations, and individual backgrounds. Once again, this good news is for everyone: the righteous or unrighteous, the rich or poor, the young or old, the religious or secular.

What is the content of this "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10)? It is the birth of Jesus Christ. An angel of the Lord said to Joseph in a dream: "She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins" (Matthews 1:21). This declaration reveals the cornerstone doctrine of our Christian faith.

In our society, many people face various challenges. Some have suffered great pain, financial difficulties, or broken relationships. Others are trapped in destructive habits or burdened by regret. Many struggle to move beyond past bitterness. In short, everyone has their own issues in life.

When we examine the root of our problems, however, we find that, from God's perspective, our true enemies are the bondage of sin and the fear of death. Modern advancements have given us marvelous technologies, miracle drugs, and worldwide communication methods. We can stay connected through cell phones, e-mail, and video chats. Yet, our relationships often feel more superficial than ever. Fighting among nations, hurting those closest to us, committing violence and crime, enduring poverty and bullying-these continue in a world darkened by the spirit of evil. Do you know that only human beings harm and kill one another without need?

Doing wrong is not a light matter. Sin leaves a mark and brings eternal consequences. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Let us pause to think about this: how would we feel if we were destined to work hard to eat and live, only to finally return to the dust from which we came?" Such a prospect would discourage us all. Our lives would feel meaningless, no matter how much we have accomplished. But death is not the end. The Bible also states: "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..." (Hebrews 9:27). If we are further destined to stand before God's judgment and face eternal punishment, we would surely despair! Due to this spiritual reality, we are like people diagnosed with a terminal, spiritually incurable disease.

What we truly need in this desperate circumstance is to be saved from our sins. The Apostle John shared this well-known promise from the Lord: "For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). What a sacred and saving statement! The most beautiful word in this scripture is the inclusive word, "whoever." Jesus can rescue anyone-regardless of what they have done, who they are, or how difficult their circumstances may be. No matter what challenge we face, our Saviour, Jesus, understands because of His suffering on the cross. Jesus is the only answer to the influence of sin and the impact of death. Whoever we are, we can be saved. No one needs to perish. If we repent of our sins before Christ and put our trust in the Lord, God forgives all our wrongdoings and grants us eternal life.

After the declaration of Jesus' birth, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel and praised God: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14). Baby Jesus is the glory of God and the peace for God's people.

This evening, we celebrate the birth of the Saviour in the town of David, Jesus Christ. This story is not just for the shepherds of 2,024 years ago but for all people today. The baby has been born to us- to you and me- right here and right now! This good news is deeply personal and individual. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this by saying: "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). God wants us to accept Jesus Christ as our Immanuel, who is with each of us, tonight and always.

Today, we are all invited to a birthday party for Jesus. It is His party, but He offers us the most blessed and amazing gift of Himself. Let us examine our hearts, repent of our sinful nature, and recommit to walking our journey of faith before God. Let us receive our Heavenly Father's greatest gift, His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the Good News of Great Joy this Christmas and throughout the New Year, 2025.

** In this sermon, I have incorporated from various messages based on the text Luke 2:1-14.*