

**A MESSAGE NOT IN A BOTTLE**

Luke 2:10

**INTRODUCTION**

Messages in a bottle.

I'm glad that God did not choose to send the message of Jesus' birth in a bottle. At the same time, he did choose a couple of unique ways. One that was quite subtle was to hang a star in the sky. It was only some astronomers in Persia that noticed that star and then made the long trek to Jerusalem. The other way was not so subtle, but still, it was a bit obscure. God sent an angel to a few shepherds on a hillside. The angel, along with a numberless choir of angels, lit up the dark night in a spectacular fashion with brilliant light. But, as far as we know, it was just those few shepherds that saw it.

Eventually, though, God's message got out to the world. And today, the message of the angel to the shepherds about Christmas is proclaimed all over the world. As Luke tells the story:

*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. Luke 2:10 <sup>ESV</sup>*

We started our advent series last week by looking at the first few words of the angel: *Fear not, for behold*, and saw that they reflect how God not only wanted to get the attention of the shepherds, he wants to get our attention as well.

This morning, I want us to look at the words, "I bring you." The angel spoke on behalf of God, who brought the good news to the shepherds.

**Main Idea:** God has brought **us** the good news, so that we can bring the good news to others.

Why did God need to bring the good news to us? He could have just had Mary give birth to Jesus and let the news slowly filter out to people, assuming people would automatically respond to the good news. But he didn't, and for several reasons.

One reason was that:

**1. God needed to bring the good news to us because of our condition**

Paul writes about our human condition:

*There is no one who understands;*

*there is no one who seeks God. Romans 3:11 <sup>NIV</sup>*

What Paul is saying is that if God didn't bring the good news to us, we would not be seeking it. And he is right.

I am constantly amazed that more people are not interested in this good news of God's love and forgiveness. The good news of the arrival of Jesus is truly the best news anyone could ever hear. But why aren't people streaming to churches and begging Christians to tell them the good news?

The primary reason is something that Jesus referred to when he first started his

ministry. Matthew tells us:

*Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—<sup>14</sup> to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:*

<sup>15</sup> *“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,  
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles—*

<sup>16</sup> *the people living in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of the shadow of death  
a light has dawned.” Matthew 4:13-16 <sup>NIV</sup>*

When Jesus came, people were living in darkness. That’s a picture of people not knowing the truth.

According to Wycliffe Bible Translators, Oct. 2018: The Bible is printed now in over 683 languages. God’s good news about Jesus is accessible to about 75% of the people in the world. That represents 5.7 billion people. People have the good news available, but in most countries, people are not flocking to hear the good news. And the reason is the same today as it was in Jesus’ day: people are living in darkness.

One evidence of this is that people do not seek God. John makes this assessment:

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. John 3:19 <sup>NIV</sup>*

Jesus came, but people still love darkness. Instead of wanting to know the truth and to live by the truth, they love their sin too much. This explains why your nonchristian friends and family members are not asking you to explain the good news of Jesus to them.

Because people don’t seek God, God needed to bring the good news to us. And he still needs to bring the good news to people today.

God needed to bring the good new to us because of our condition. Secondly, though:

## **2. GOD WANTED TO BRING THE GOOD NEWS TO US BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE.**

God loves you. This is the greatest truth anyone could ever hear. This is the foundational truth of the entire Bible and mission of God for the world.

God’s love for us is seen in several significant ways. Let me note just three ways we can see how much God loves all the world:

a. God set into motion a plan to enable us to be reconciled to him

If God didn’t care about us, he would never have developed a plan to forgive our sins, and certainly would never have made a plan that required his Son, Jesus, to have to die for us.

But Paul tells us:

*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for*

us. *Romans 5:8* <sup>NIV</sup>

God demonstrated his love by sending Jesus. This was the only way our sins could be forgiven. And God chose to send his Son to the cross so that we could be reconciled to him. What incredible love!

Then God shows his love for us because he:

b. God seeks us to come to him

I don't know about you, but I usually don't try to develop a relationship with people who aren't interested in me or what I have to say. They don't want to be my friends, so I don't try to do what is not going to happen. But that is not what God is like.

The religious leaders in Jesus' day believed that God only cared about people who were good enough in God's eyes. But Jesus shattered their nice little theological boxes to help them realize how much God loved **all** people, especially those whom the religious leaders termed *sinners*.

Three of the greatest pictures of God are in Luke 15. Jesus tells the parable of the shepherd who has one sheep that wanders away from the flock, and the shepherd leaves the 99 other sheep and goes after that one sheep because it means so much to him.

And in the next parable, Jesus tells the story of the woman who loses one of her coins, and she scours all through her home until she finds it.

And then, in what most would say is the greatest parable Jesus told about God, he tells of the son who brazenly demands his inheritance from his father, leaves home and recklessly spends it on prostitutes and parties, until he is totally penniless and homeless. He comes home, hoping at least, that his father would allow him to work as a slave, only to have his father run to him and welcome him back as his son.

These pictures—of the shepherd, the woman, and the father—are all pictures of God and how much God seeks us because he loves us.

This is the heart of God. He loves us so much that he wants every person in the world to experience his forgiveness and his love, and he is seeking and reaching out to people, even those who have rejected him.

The third expression of God's love is that:

c. God loves us so much he has brought us into his family

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! 1 John 3:1* <sup>NIV</sup>

I greatly admire those of you who have adopted children. You were not compelled to do it. No one was going to pay you lots of money to do it; in fact **you** had to pay lots of money to adopt your child, and then you are going to have to continue to pay money, as every parent has to, to feed and clothe and raise your child. It doesn't make any sense for you to do that—except for your love.

There was no sense or reason why God chose to adopt us and bring us into his family, except because of his love.

The message the angel brought that night from God was a message bathed in love for

us. God wants the world to know how much he loves us, and he brought the good news to us to tell us that.

God needed to bring the good news to us because of our condition. God wanted to bring the good news to us because of his love. But it doesn't stop there:

### **3. GOD BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS TO US TO PASS ON TO OTHERS.**

After the shepherds heard the good news it says:

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." Luke 2:15 <sup>NIV</sup>*

They went, saw the new-born baby, and then it says:

*After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished. Luke 2:17-18 <sup>NLT</sup>*

God brought the good news to the shepherds and then the shepherds brought the good news to people.

This brings up the importance of our role: God may get people's attention and people may have an awareness of God, but people need someone to tell them the message so they will know how to respond to God, and what to believe.

Paul writes:

*How can they call on [the Lord] to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? Romans 10:14 <sup>NLT</sup>*

God is the first evangelist because he communicated the message on that first Christmas night. He set into motion his example of what we are to do today. God sent an angel to the shepherds to hear the message. He is sending us to others to hear that same message.

Among the last words of Jesus before he went back to heaven, he said to his disciples:

*"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Mark 16:15 <sup>ESV</sup>*

Proclaim to all people the good news of Jesus. People need the good news brought to them. This is **our** mission, **our** job. This is the responsibility of every Christian.

Peter ties together this role with the first point about people living in darkness:

*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Pet 2:9 <sup>NIV</sup>*

God has called us out of darkness and into his light, so that we might declare his praises to others who are still in the darkness.

E.g. John Chau

**God has brought us the good news, so that we can bring the good news**

***to others.***

***Next Steps:***

1. God has brought the good news to us. If you haven't yet received it and embraced it as your good news, do so today.

2. If you have received the good news, whom will you bring the good news to?