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Tidings of Love
Luke 1-2, Daniel 9-10
Dec 20, 2015, Steve Karadimas

Exactly one year ago I was up here speaking to you about Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was a young girl, she was a junior high aged girl. And no doubt as we look through the Christmas story she plays a key role. She was faithful, she was joyful, she was obedient. Mary was an amazing young girl. But this year I want to share the same story from another angle. I want to attempt to share the story through the eyes of angels. This is going to be difficult but I hope as we go through this morning we can see the story in a different light and my prayer is that the spirit speaks to you through this story in a way that maybe hasn't happened before.

First lets talk a bit about angels because mythology has largely shaped our view of angels. Angels are not little babies with wings playing the harp, angels are not God and they are not like man either, so what are they? Their name comes from the Greek word "Aggelos" which means messenger. As we get into the story this morning we will see that Angels are the messengers from God. But what do they look like? we get some descriptions of what angels look like in Isaiah a type of angel called the seraphim are described as having six wings: two that cover his face, 2 that cover his feet and two that he used to fly with. we're not entirely sure what they look like because it appears as though they can change their appearance. But this morning I'm going to be going back and forth between the old testament and the gospels, but let's go back to **Daniel chapter 10 verse 4-6**. Daniel had some crazy experiences with angels through his visions but this is a vision he had of an angel, and take a moment to listen here, maybe even close your eyes so you can picture this because it's amazing."

[2]

Daniel 10:4-6 (NLT)

4 On April 23, as I was standing on the bank of the great Tigris River, 5 I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. 6 His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning, and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people." ok, open your eyes.

No wonder nearly everyone who sees an angel is terrified when they first see them, that is one crazy looking being. The language that Daniel uses to explain this angel is obviously as magnificent as he can make it, this angel looks glorious. And Daniel is one of the key books about Angels and he has some experience with an Angel named Gabriel. Gabriel is one of two angels that is named in the bible and his name means "God is my strength." Gabriel may have been the angel that was just described in that passage. because if we go back just one chapter Gabriel meets with Daniel in the year 600 BC. But before we go there I'm going to go back another 400 years to the time of King David to the year 1000 BC. David was the king of Israel in it's golden age, the two kingdoms of Israel were united. And while David was taking a census, one of only a few census's taken throughout Israel's history, we'll talk about another time when Israel is taking a census in just a moment. But during this census an angel of the Lord appears to David and tells him to build an altar.

Well what is an altar? well the word is a Hebrew word that means a place of slaughter or sacrifice. and it's a structure where you place a burnt offering usually an animal that was pure or without any fault and you would kill it and burn it. This is representative of giving our best to God. We all screw up and because we screw up we need to pay for what we've done so we can be made right again. Just like if you get a speeding ticket you need to pay for that ticket so you can be made right with the law again. Altars are obviously important because we need to be made right with God, since we all sin none of us deserve to be with God, and at this time sacrifices are the only way to be made right with God.

Well David went to a man named Araunah and he wanted to buy the stuff for the offering. he wanted to buy the oxen and the wood but Araunah said he would give it to him for free but David insisted that he paid for the offering so David paid him 600 pieces of gold for the oxen and the wood for the offering. I don't know how much money this is, but I know it is a lot. This shows how much our sin costs, it's more than we can afford to pay. And this is what they would do to become right with God. They had fallen short of God's glory and to make it right they had to sacrifice, and it was expensive and difficult. And this was all instructed to king David by an Angel who was watching over him. But as we progress in this story we'll see that God is weaving something into this story to make something much better than an altar like the one David was instructed to make by angels. Because the angel told David to make that altar and sacrifice for the Lord, but that was temporary, that sacrifice didn't make him right with God sin still separated him from God. The angel that appeared to David offered a temporary solution to an eternal problem.

As we go further on in history Israel is divided and Judah is the southern kingdom and it held on to its independence longer than the north but in the book of Daniel we see the collapse of this kingdom as it was taken over by Babylon. And at this point we are introduced to Daniel. Daniel worked his way up until one day he was praying and once again an angel comes, just like the angel that came to David and Daniel says this:

[3]

Daniel 9:20-25 (NLT)

“20 I went on praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people, pleading with the Lord my God for Jerusalem, his holy mountain. 21 As I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came swiftly to me at the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He explained to me, “Daniel, I have come here to give you insight and understanding. 23 The moment you began praying, a command was given. And now I am here to tell you what it was, for you are very precious to God. Listen carefully so that you can understand the meaning of your vision.

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24 “A period of seventy sets of seven[c] has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place. 25 Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One—comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses, despite the perilous times.

I'm not going to get into detail about the talk of seventy sets of seven, but I'll let you figure that out. Gabriel the angel is saying to Daniel that in some amount of time they will put an end to their sin, they will atone for their guilt, they will bring in everlasting righteousness, this vision will be confirmed and a ruler, the anointed one will come and rebuild Jerusalem. Who could that be? I have an idea of who that might be. But I wonder if Gabriel knew exactly who that would be? When Gabriel spoke with Daniel I'm sure he was expecting something glorious.

Because after 600 years who does God send to bring this message to Mary the mother of Jesus? well he sends the same angel who told Daniel about the coming of Jesus. He sends Gabriel. Which brings us to the first century in Bethlehem when once again just like in the time of David a census is being taken, and once again just as Daniel was approached by Gabriel a young unsuspecting girl hears the voice of the angel Gabriel, and here we meet Mary. She was about 15 at the time, she was engaged to Joseph a young carpenter, the descendent of king David. Gabriel appears to Mary and says this:

[5]

Luke 1:28-38 (NLT)

“Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel[e] forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

34 Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

[6]

35 The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail.”

38 Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

You have to wonder what Gabriel thought of when he approached Mary. Gabriel had been around for millennia and this is who he approached with the message of Jesus Christ. Gabriel was there when king David was ruling Israel and Jesus was going to be a king's descendant. He gave Daniel the message of how Jesus was going to come as a ruler and rebuild Jerusalem. And then the day comes when God calls Gabriel in and says to him the time has come, the anointed one, the ruler is coming to earth, Jesus is coming. Gabriel must have been so excited and then God tells him I need you to talk to Mary, the poor teenage girl that she is going to give birth to Jesus in a stable next to that donkey over there. Gabriel must be thinking I have been talking about Jesus' coming for centuries and now he is coming as a baby of Mary?

This doesn't make much sense I wonder what was going on in Gabriel's mind as he was told to be a messenger of the news of Jesus' coming. Was he disappointed in the simplicity of it all?

You know what I think sometimes we miss out on God because we fail to see God in the simple things. And whether we like it or not God can be very simple. He sent Jesus as a baby to a poor girl. he gave us laws like love God and love people, he can be simple. you're going to miss out on seeing the Holy Spirit if you can't see God in the simple things like how he creates every morning, how he created us to be in community, how beautiful a snowfall can be, God speaks to us in simple ways. He spoke to the world in a simple way when he told Gabriel to give the message of Jesus' coming as a poor boy and Gabriel accepts God's simple idea and obeys God and gives the message to Mary. Then a short nine months later

[7]

Luke 2:1-7 (NLT)

“the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. 2 (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. 4 And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. 5 He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant.

6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. 7 She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

This was the moment that Gabriel had prophesied to Daniel 600 years ago, that the ruler would come. once again we have a new king, a descendent of the great king David had come. Maybe it wasn't what the Jews had expected, maybe it wasn't what the angels expected but when he came they knew that the prophecy had been fulfilled. because

[8]

Luke 2:8-20 (NLT)

“That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

[9]

13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

***14 “Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”***

15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

[10]

16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, 19 but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. 20 The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Although this may have not been what the angels expected when they saw it they reacted with joy. It says the armies of heaven began praising God saying “**Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.**” The angels saw it, but you know who didn’t see it? King Herod didn’t see it, he was sending people to kill Jesus, the Roman empire didn’t see it, the wealthy and powerful didn’t see it, but there were a couple others who saw it, the shepherds. the lowest of the low, the down and out and poor saw it and began to spread the news. Gabriel was waiting centuries for this to come, he had spoken to kings he had spoken to Daniel and now the only ones who are ready to hear is a poor teenage girl her carpenter husband and a bunch of shepherds. Jesus came into the world that day, Gabriel had finally seen what he prophesied so long ago. And Jesus’ life maybe started out from humble beginnings but there is a reason why we are still celebrating his birth and it is not because of this nice Christmas birth story, it’s about the life that came from that birth. You see Gabriel’s prophecy came true, Jesus did become a ruler but maybe not the one that you would expect. He didn’t rule with an iron sceptre over the roman empire but he ruled over an army of angels bringing love to a fallen world. And as he ruled Jesus radically preached love. Once when he was asked what was the most important commandment Jesus replied,

Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT)

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

That is what Jesus lived out, he lived out love. He gave us that example. He lived a pure and blameless life without any fault. But the reason why the Christmas story is so important is because of another story 33 years later. Do you remember our first story of angels that we talked about this morning when an angel of the lord told King David to build an altar to make a sacrifice to God? well that is how the Israelites had been trying to make themselves right before God for a thousand years. But one of David’s descendants would do a better job than David at making a sacrifice that would last. This is obviously Jesus who lived a perfect life and died on the cross for our sins so that whoever believes in him will have eternal life.

This week we are celebrating the fourth week of advent, love. Jesus is love and that's the story that we celebrate. That through thousands of years God weaved together one story through David, through Daniel, through Gabriel, and most importantly through Jesus and in that story there is one common theme, which is love, God loved the world so he sent his son. So I urge you this year whenever you see a nativity scene, whenever you think of Christmas think of the love of Jesus and think of his message to love God and love people.