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GOOD NEWS OF A GREAT JOY

Luke 2:10

Our sermon outline is based on the theme Scripture for the 1976 Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions. A member of Girls in Action wrote the following letter to the Foreign Mission Board.

Dear Sir:

Will you please send me Lottie Moon's correct address. I am a G. A. for the Mineral Springs Baptist Church. Thank you.

The G. A. knew that Lottie Moon was a missionary. She did not know that since Christmas Eve, 1912 - Miss Moon's current address had been in care of her Father in Heaven.

The offering which bears her name has a current address, in more than 80 countries.

When we think of (good news), we think of news as we receive it. Our nation waits for news on election night. Our nation waits for news at periodical times during the day. People are looking to see how the Dow Jones averages can make or break the day. Whether it is bad news or good news -

Other people look for the morning newspaper. And others look for the evening newspaper. And they consume that news and they discover that sweep across the world. And sometimes it seems that the news is carrying us down to despair.

But the good news that is being considered during the week of prayer, is the kind of news that can change society.

60% of the ordained ministers of the world are inside the United States. While 95% of the world's population is outside of the U. S. This means that the 2,650 Baptist Missionaries which are now under appointment to 82 countries and territories have a great responsibility to proclaim the good news of a great joy.

Almost half of the financial support of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions, comes from the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. We have a goal of 26 million this year.

And our theme has been good news of a great joy.

Old Doctor Alderidge wrote a poem one time on world need. It was a challenge.

World need, world need

World need

How we feel, dear God, the full urge of it.

And the swing, and the swirl, and the surge of it

The distress of it

The dire press of it

And the pall and the thrall and the call

That come now from the great and the small.

World need, world need

How we fear dear God, the dread chill of it

The vast sweep of it

The great depth of it

That now breaks out sad hearts everywhere.

He closes that bit of poetry with -

We thank thee Dear God

For the chance of it

For the reach, and the risk, and the romance of it

The high hope of it

The strong cope of it

That comes now for the task of today.

What a challenge to get the good news of great joy.

There are three key words that I might use today. As I began to think about this subject, that might help us to remember this theme. First, the plan. Second, the purpose, Third, the promise.

I. THE PLAN

The good news of great joy was meant for sharing. And there must be a plan. The shepherds learned the good news from the angel. And after they saw for themselves that the Saviour was born, they told others the good news. The shepherds did not merely repeat what someone else had said. They reported their own experiences.

Good news is too good to keep to ourselves.

Sometime ago (Adam Clayton Powell) urged his hearers to keep the faith baby.

A radio evangelist picked up that, and said, don't keep the faith - give it away.

Now actually both of those men were right. We must keep our faith bright within us. For we dare not bottle it up. It was made to give away and to share.

There are needs in our church. There are needs in our community. In which there is a call for sharing the good news and salvation. There is a plan that is being developed in our Sunday School for taking the good news of great joy. And six committees were formed last Wednesday evening at the Sunday School Council to initiate a plan for sharing the good news of great joy. And this is something that I think is a real challenge for us. We need a plan.

II. THE PURPOSE

Now the purpose of the good news coming was prophesied and it was predicted that this good news would do something when it arrived.

This was the purpose - Luke 1:53. We read the text - He had filled the hungry with good things. And the rich, he has sent empty away. In a newspaper many years ago - there was an article entitled "Prisoners Christmas". The festival of love and peace.

He is going to take the side of people who through no merit of their own - but because of his love. He who not only expresses this great love for the world but put it into effect. He caused his light to shine in the darkness. He has given eternal hope - he has done that by himself - becoming a human child - one of ourselves in the town in the stable at Bethlehem.

It doesn't mean that he wants to do this - or that he will do it. But he has already done it. Listen very closely to this text -- if you are hungry, then he has

already filled you with good things. If you are rich, then he has already sent you away empty. Now that was what happened there. And this decision and this separation that when the infant Jesus was born - the choice was made. And there the hungry were filled with good things. And the rich were sent away empty.

Now this text may seem to have a doubt meaning or a double message to us.

The hungry - what kind of people are they. A hungry man is one who lacks what he most needs. Not anything fine or fancy - which he could easily do without. But the bare essentials that he simply must have. And now he has no way and no means of securing them for himself. He cannot avoid going down hill to his death. And he cannot help be afraid that he will starve.

What is the most need - it might be a piece of bread. A bowl of soup. Or a few handfuls of rice. You have no doubt seen pictures of starving women and children in India. Perhaps even one or another of you have been hungry at some time. But I imagine just now, as long as you are in this building, that is not your main problem. What a man needs most may however be simply a life he considers worth living.

What he sees instead is a wrecked, spoiled life. Now he's hungry. What he most needs might simply be a little joy. He looks about him and finds nothing - nothing that really makes him happy. He is so hungry.

He might simply need to be loved properly by someone. There might be no one to love him - so he is hungry.

There may be someone whose greatest need today is a good conscience. Who is there who ought not to have a good conscience. And what if someone could avoid having a bad conscience. Then he is hungry - he is very hungry.

What he might need most of all is to settle his affairs with God. He has heard about God and it has meant nothing to him. He could not make anything out of it.

Of such hungry people we now hear, he has filled them with good things. Good news. Good tidings. He has not merely given them something to soothe like a socking filled at Christmas for a child. That may be cheap. But he has given them something - something he likes. It may be like the crumbs that fell from the Master's table at poor Lazarus' feet.

But this little baby coming down for hungry men. And yet, one time, he said my God, why have you abandon me. He came and stood at their side. He took their place of weakness at his own expense. He intervenes against Satan. He sent the hungry man away completely justified. He sent the sinful Publican down to his home from the temple justified. He took the true saint into his bosom - like the poor man Lazarus. He calls him into the service - just like he called Peter who was fishing. He welcomed the Prodigal Son home, with a fatted calf.

Think of the hungry needs around this world today. There is need of perhaps a missionaries' house in Guam - where missionary Parks and his family recently withstood a 190 MPH winds. All the windows were blown out of the house.

It might be a little church down in Uruguay - where Lottie Moon offerings provided 90% of the funds, for a building - and the church is growing inspite of not having a pastor for over 3 years.

In Costa Rica, there is need for a movie projector for missionaries to use in film fesitvals. One retreat recently drew 300 people.

Think of those who are trying to help feed the hungry. From Israel, a Baptist

layman promoted a love offering last year. And he raised \$1,000 and sent it to the U. S. as part of the record 26 million dollars.

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering recently provided \$13,000 for an automobile in Parguay. That sounds expensive. The same car could be bought here for half that much. And we remember that gasoline sells in the South American nation for \$1.75 a gallon.

Yes, the purpose of this good news was prophesied in the need.

But who may be rich, and who are these rich that are mentioned in this text. Are they the group that piled up shares and bank accounts. Or who collect original paintings and have fabulous dwellings on the lakes. Or who drive Mercedes. Whatever the fancy things they may have, if they feel really satisfied with all of this, and if they consider themselves safe - then they certainly belong to the rich that are referred to here.

The rich, in the sense meant here, are really not those people - but all those people with or without bank accounts. Who think they can master life by their own wisdom and power. Those who, as we say, know the thrills. Who consider themselves clever and wise - they are like the Pharisees in the temple. Trust in their own righteousness. Those who think they must thank God that they are not like these rogues who feel they are able to announce the good they have done or are still doing. And claiming that God and man ought to be thoroughly satisfied with them. These are the ones.

*Miss Keeho - First State Girl - 21 - still searching songs
I hope, I want to work my way out to - Prostitution ch. pending*

Precisely, we read he sent them empty away. He says they sent them away empty. He has not done any good for them either. But he sent them away like people who dial the wrong number on the telephone. And did not get the desired result. Or he has gone to the wrong address on a street. Or who have gone to pick up their baggage and

could not find it. He simply did not find them interesting - and he could not use them. And he gave them nothing.

What was going on in the stable of Bethlehem simply did not concern these rich people. And right to this very day, it is a fact that Christmas cannot make these rich people glad.

We say this is a time of love and of peace. But it has no meaning for the poor rich.

There are some people who are afraid to be hungry - who are really hungry. There are those who feel they are satisfied, even though they are on the brink of death. The purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ was that men might joyfully celebrate.

And the thing about rich men, and all men - is that they ought to recognize and confess - they are not clever. They are wretched creatures. And they ought to go and stand openly with the Publican and not be a fake. Right at this point, is where they need a Saviour.

Do you remember reading in the Gospel how it says - blessed are the poor. They would be filled.

And that is why we hear the angel say to the shepherd - good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto us is born this day, a Saviour. And when a man has his heart filled - then he is released from lying, he is released from all sorts of sins. And when his heart thinks about other hungry people of all kinds. The problems of the world then become his problems - by doing this, he can then celebrate a joyful Christmas.

And then he goes out and gives an invitation, to others - to come in and to share with the Master. And when we go out and bring them in even in a building such as we are meeting in today - certainly there can be great joy.

III. PROMISE

The promise is that good news of great joy has come to all men.

So we have a plan for sharing this good news. We plan to share it through our giving. The purpose is that there are people who have needs and who are hungry. And need to be filled with the spiritual blessings of our wonderful Saviour.

And now in the final place - he has promised joy. Great joy, he says.

Now I want to close this message with an illustration that was given by Dr. Rowland Level. I read this story many years ago, in which he wrote about his mother. But it has its bearing on this good news. And on world missions. The concern of our hearts.

He began by saying - would that I were an artist. My masterpiece would be my memory of my mother's face. She had soft blue eyes, shining like sun lite dew on violets. Twinkling like stars. Her forehead was broad and high. Her mouth was strong and smiling - showing a sense of humor and a happy outlook on life. Her hair was dark. Her complexion was fair. Her beauty was the beauty of holiness and love. Her personality radiated spirituality. Her charm came from constant companionship with Christ. She was born Cora Berry - she graduated from college and taught school before her marriage. He went on - mother was devoted to her home and family of 9 boys. The husband and the 9 boys filled half of her heart.

The love for Christ and his church filled the other half. And she kept the two family pews - the second and the third from the front full of boys at every service. During worship, she smiled, she wept, she rejoiced, she prayed, and she watched to see if her boys were listening. After a sermon by Rev. W. A. Borum, one of the boys would say at the dinner table - Mama, he took you right up to the pearl gates today, didn't he? The church at Oxford was the center of her devotion. For 40 years she taught a class of children.

She did as much church visiting as the average paid visitor. She would hitch the old horse to the surry and drive all over town. And go to the high social areas, and well as the back alley. She loved missions.

Once, Dr. J. D. Gamble took a collection for foreign missions. She took off the gold watch and chain her father gave her on their marriage night and put it in the collection plate. A rich man redeemed it and my father saw to it that that was left at home on missionary days thereafter.

She read her Bible at sunrise while she churned. She conducted family worship at the breakfast table. And prayed for her boys daily - as she bent over a trunk in her dressing parlor.

Her home was a haven of hospitality for visiting preachers. For friends of the boys, for people who had need, for beggars. She said I remember one old woman came by and mother did not know her. And the woman said I heard that you were a good woman and she came to visit awhile. She stayed and enjoyed mother's free board from September until Christmas. Much to the boys disgust. He said time fails to tell of her quest for souls. The winning of people to Christ. Going out into highways and hedges. He said I remember, she went to the jail once, to carry food to a condemned murderer. And on the gallows before he was hung, he said to those people standing there -

to exaggerate the joy and the possible usefulness like a person as Mrs. Level. The story which I just told you. And what a supreme sense of mission. Would you like to have it. And the joy of life depends largely on the purpose, one has for living.

that Mrs. George Level had led him to accept Christ. So he was going to Heaven. He said it was amazing how her prayers were answered. They would fill a book. At her death, he said, we found a pencil written letter in the old Bible.

My dear dear boys,

The Lord may call me at any time. It will be to be with Jesus. He has sweetened the tune so death is robbed of its terror. My heart's desire and prayer for each of you is that you may ever live for Jesus. That your chief aim and desire is that every action may be to glorify God. Oh, ever live for Jesus - that he may always use you for his glory, in bringing lost men to the cross in the extension of his kingdom. At last, may we all be gathered around his throne. And unbroken family to praise his name forever.

Mama

That was a wonderful inspiration of the promised joy of the good news of great joy. This dear Christian woman's family - she shared it. And this is the challenge that comes today. God's news - embodied in a little baby boy. And the angels rejoiced as they spoke of a great joy, to all people. For 1900 years now this joy has still come to many people. And this part of the angel's declaration is still unfilled. The joy is not shared by the millions of the earth yet. It is available. But how shall they hear without a preacher. Someone must tell them.

Now our foreign mission board is attempting to get this good news of Jesus - through doubling the missionary force to 5,000. By the year 2000. This is the challenge. Amid the bad news of this world, let us turn bad news to good news. And we can be a part in the plan of turning bad news into good news. And we can be a part in the very inspiration of sharing the joy that is ours. It is impossible