

Our Christmas Praise ***“Glory to God in the Highest!”***.

Text: Luke 2:24

Suggested Hymns:

T: 34, 33, 624, 286, 630

A: 34, 744, 633, 627, 634, 33, 624, 629

- 1) In the history of the believers of old
- 2) In the experience of present-day believers
- 3) In the blessings of Christmas

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 2:14, ¹⁴ ***“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Here we have the climax of the first Christmas sermon on record. The preachers were ***“a multitude of the heavenly host,”*** who came from heaven. After the announcement of the Saviour’s birth they sang their sermon, ***“Glory to God in the Highest!”*** How could there have been any other conclusion?

What other praise could be given when God so loved the world that in His mercy (without any merit or worthiness on the part of a single person who ever lived) and out of pure love, He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?

What other praise could be given when God sent His greatest Gift so that whoever receives this Gift might have everlasting life and happiness? How could the angels do otherwise than give us the theme song of Christmas, ***“Glory to God in the highest!”*** May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. *Glory to God in the highest*

How This Works Out

In The History Of The Believers Of Old

Basically, ***“Glory to God in the highest”*** was also the song of Mary when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and said, ***“Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”*** ***you will conceive in your***

womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ... "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest.

When she heard, "*Son of the Highest,*" Mary, in complete surrender, said, "*Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.*" In other words, "*Mary is nothing, a mere handmaid. The Son of God is everything.*" The glory was not to Mary, but "*to God in the highest.*"

This was also the theme song of Zacharias when his son, John the Baptist, was born. He exclaimed, "*Blessed is the Lord God of Israel.*"¹ In the Benedictus he explains, "*For He has visited and redeemed His people.*"

The glory of God was echoed and re-echoed in the preaching of John in the desert as all people went out to him. He said, referring to Jesus, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*"² *Glory to God in the highest!*

As the Wise Men came from the East and brought Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they insisted that glory was to be given to God in the highest. For this reason Herod to them was unimportant; Caesar and imperial Rome, nothing.

In following the star to Bethlehem and in finding the Christ Child, they fell down and worshiped as they offered the best, the loveliest, and the most precious of their world. They were living the angelic Christmas theme, "*Glory to God in the highest!*"

The Christmas scene which remains most precious is that which tells how the shepherds were in their fields keeping watch over their flocks by night when, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. We read, "*They were greatly afraid!*"³

But the angel had the answer for their fears when he said, "*Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*"¹¹ "*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

Suddenly, before they could say anything, the angel chorus came with its climactic Christmas message, "*Glory to God in the highest!*"

Why were the heavens filled with the music of that song? Because the angel had spoken the good news which alone dispels all fears. "*You need not fear,*" he

said. *“The reason?” “No matter if you have sinned, you are now saved from all sin. For you a Saviour has been born, the Only-Begotten of the Father, who in saving you from all sins dispels fears for time and eternity.”*

Then the angel spokesman and the angel chorus, in order that the shepherds would know that neither they, nor Herod, nor any other person, had done anything to bring this about, gave beautiful finality to the Christmas message with their *“Glory to God in the highest!”*

2. *“Glory to God in the highest”*

How This Works Out

In The Experience Of Present-Day Believers

The marvellous thing is this that every person who has experienced Christ being born into his heart and life sings as the angels sang. How many times have we said, *“Praise God,”* or *“Thank God!”* We could just as well have taken the words of the angel chorus, *“Glory to God in the highest.”* In their hearts believers sing this doxology not only on Christmas Day but also every hour of every day of their lives.

Using a newly developed telescope, astronomers, in peering through an opening in the Milky Way visible to our eyes, discovered not just another star or planet, but another new Milky Way, a vast series of new planets, too many to be counted.

One scientist in commenting said, *“Can anybody now doubt that we are nothing? Now we can ‘see’ that God is everything.”* We who are believers do not need to see innumerable planets to acknowledge that we are nothing and that God is everything.

We have the stronger proof this Christmas Day when we know that in the city of David there was born for us — each and every individual — a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. When we believe that, then God is everything. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of all life and existence. He is our first choice in everything. He comes first before anything that we have or own or love. Therefore *“Glory to God in the highest!”*

There was a time in the lives of the shepherds, the Virgin Mary, the tax collector Zacchaeus, the thief upon the cross, Paul on his way to Damascus, and others, when they were afraid. Fear came to them in different ways. But in each

of them fear was forever removed the moment they knew Jesus Christ as their Saviour. That was their continuing Christmas present.

This is a Christmas present not only for the shepherds, the thief upon the cross, or for Paul, but also for you and for me — for everyone who will receive the Christ Child as his Lord and personal Saviour. This Christmas Gift brings joy. When in your life you have the peace of God which comes to those who know Jesus Christ of Calvary's cross as their Saviour from sin, then you have a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

You have the victory which overcomes the world. This peace bestows remarkable calm and strength in the face of sicknesses, operations, financial reverses, wars, rumours of wars, etc., and gives us courage to look death in the face unafraid.

Those who have experienced this peace of God through the Christ Child will not be content only to hear how the angels sang, "*Glory to God in the highest!*" You will insist upon singing it yourself! In your life there will be a new and beautiful overtone. From now on Christ will come first in the things you speak!

In your Christmas giving, great and generous as you may be to your relatives and friends, there is one friend who will come first. Even your time, your friends, your business, will not come first, but your whole life will prove that you believe, "*Glory to God in the highest!*"

3. "*Glory to God in the highest!*"

How This Works Out

In The Blessings Of Christmas

In our Christmas celebration we would like to hear more of the angelic song. We wish more than to just have God hear us sing the well-known words. We wish that God would look down and see in our lives the fruits of our faith. We wish that God would see that He did not send His dear Son into our lives in vain. We wish that God would see by the works we do through the Holy Spirit, and by the way in which we do them that we want to give "*glory to God in the highest.*"

The moment the spiritual principle that God alone is the Highest in our lives is really acted upon, the full blessing of Christmas comes. The angels sang, "*Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!*" Because God has showed us His good will we should put Him first in our lives.

Martin Luther taught us to put first things first when he wrote, “*We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.*” The Virgin Mary put God first when she offered herself in complete surrender as the “*handmaid of the Lord.*”

Paradise was opened for the thief on the cross when on Good Friday he had faith to believe in Christ and to place Him first and highest in time and eternity with his confession, “*Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.*”⁴ No torturing pain, no blaspheming mob, no shameful cross, could take away from him, nor can take away from any believer, who puts Christ first, that peace of God which passes all understanding.

This Christmas Day let us give to the Christ Child the present for which He longs — the gift of our own heart, sinful though it is, as we pray:⁵

*O holy child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in:
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Immanuel!*

When you pray like this and mean it, then Christmas has truly come.

Then you will know that Christmas is being celebrated not merely by others but that Christmas, the birth of the Saviour, has happened anew in your heart and life. You may rejoice knowing that you are rich, indescribably rich, for you have the one Present which all people desperately need — the gracious Gift of a Saviour from sin.

We who possess that Gift have through Him not only the freedom from sin and its penalty but also a new life and enter upon a new world. Through Him, as joint heirs with Him, we share all the treasures of heaven.

The moment Christ is born in us something follows. We cannot keep our Saviour and His blessings to ourselves. We must share Him with others. The shepherds, after hearing the angels, went quickly to Bethlehem, found the Christ Child, and then — “*they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.*”⁶

This is the final proof that the Christ Child has truly been born in your heart. Do you mean it when you say, “*Glory to God in the highest*”? You do if you follow the example of the shepherds. If God is first in your life, if you are filled with the joy and jubilation of Heaven’s Christmas gift, then you cannot keep the good news to yourself. You will wish your loved ones, your best friends, the entire world, to have what you have.

On this Christmas Day, as we think of this troubled and needy world, we see only ONE who can assure us true and eternal peace.

Do you really believe this message? You do? You really believe that the Christ Child is the Prince of Peace? Then you are not true to yourself — you are not true to God — unless you tell it and live it!

By your works and your life let the world know that you put first things first. May your Christmas message be “*Glory to God in the highest!*” Receiving Him, you have the best Christmas gift — “*And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!*”¹ “*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*” Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 1:68

² John 3:30

³ Luke 2:9

⁴ Luke 23:42

⁵ Hymn 633

⁶ Luke 2:17