

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 2: 8-20

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Luke Chapter 2. We will read verses 8-20 today.

Yesterday we read that Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem, and as a result Jesus was born and came to the earth. Outwardly, His birth appeared extremely humble: there was no room in any inn to receive Him, and Mary herself had to personally place Jesus in a manger. His birth not only was unlike that of a king, but seemed even more humble and lowly than the birth of most people. This was the situation on earth, because the earth had already become Satan's kingdom; Satan always exhausts every means to oppose God and to damage God's purpose. But beginning with verse eight, Luke immediately brings us to the heavens, and what happens on earth and what happens in heaven form a very strong contrast.

Verse 8-9: "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid."

On the one hand, it seemed that on earth no one knew that the Son of God, the Messiah who saves mankind, had already come; yet the angels in heaven were eager and hurried to announce this exceedingly good news. To whom was it announced? "To shepherds living out in the fields near Bethlehem." This group of shepherds were still keeping watch over their duty at night, guarding their flocks according to their shifts. These flocks were very likely for sacrificial offerings, and these shepherds, who were faithful to their responsibilities and diligently caring for the sheep, became the first people on earth to hear this great good news. At that moment, an angel of the Lord came to them and stood beside them, and the glory

of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Many times, when we faithfully shepherd God's flock in the church, at God's appointed time He will also appear to us, and the glory of God will shine upon us.

Verse 10: "Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.'"

Although in the city of Bethlehem everyone was busy and bustling, and there was not a single place left for His Son Jesus Christ, the angels hurried to announce this great news to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem who were keeping watch over their flocks according to their shifts. The first words he spoke were, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people." Jesus was born into a Jewish family, but His birth, this exceedingly good news, was not only for the Jews; it is for all people.

Just as in Genesis chapter 12, when God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and go into the good land, God's promise to him was that He would make him a great nation, make his name great, and cause all people to be blessed through him; then He added the final word, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Abraham was called and became the ancestor of the called race for the sake of all the families of the earth; in the same way, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem into an Israelite family, yet He was for all the peoples of the earth.

Verse 11: "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

The angel who announced the message made the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ very clear. In the city of David, God gave David a promise that one would come who would sit on David's throne, and His kingdom would be forever, and today this promise has been fulfilled. His birth was for the salvation of all humanity; He is the Savior, He is Christ the Lord.

The Lord spoke of Himself as the One who would come to rule; Christ declared that He is the Anointed One, the Messiah. The angel knew very clearly that when this group of shepherds heard this great joy of good news, they would surely go and seek this One who is God's Anointed, this Messiah, whom the people of Israel throughout the generations had long hoped for to save them.

Verse 12: "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

The birth of Jesus was so humble and so lowly, yet this very humility was the sign of His birth. God's Anointed One, God's Messiah, was not born in the great city of Jerusalem, but was born in a manger in Bethlehem. Such a lowly birth was the sign of the Messiah; this has always been God's way of working.

Today, every one of us who is learning to serve also needs to know this principle. Whenever we place ourselves in the lowest position, this becomes the sign of our service to God. The path of one who serves God, of a servant of God, is a path that becomes narrower and narrower, and his position becomes lower and lower. Yet the narrower the path and the lower the position, the richer the grace that can be possessed. For grace is like flowing water that runs from high to low; when the position we are in is low enough, when the standing we take is sufficiently low, we are able to enjoy abundant grace, and this grace becomes the sign of our service.

Thank the Lord that although on earth no one received Jesus Christ, in heaven He announced this exceedingly good news through the angels to a group of shepherds who were faithfully watching over their flocks.

Verse 13-14: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'"

This is the highest and best praise: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” Throughout all of human history, people have been seeking peace, yet if glory is not given to God in heaven, there can be no peace on earth. When our relationship with God is right, when we are able to give God the glory He deserves, we become a group of people on earth whom He delights in; and this group of people whom He delights in can enjoy the peace that God gives.

The peace of the whole earth does not depend on human negotiations, does not depend on agreements in war, and does not even depend on how much effort people make; it depends on whether people give glory to God in heaven and whether on earth they become those whom He delights in. Only under these conditions, in this context, can we have true peace, and only then can there be real peace on earth. This group of angels, speaking to this group of faithfully serving shepherds, revealed God’s principle in working and the way for people to find peace.

Verse 15: “So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

This group of shepherds not only faithfully fulfilled their duties, but when they received the great joy of the message that God had announced to them, they were full of initiative. They immediately, after some discussion, set out to see the thing that had come to pass.

Verse 16: “And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.”

These were all the signs the angels had given them, and they were a group of people with steadfast faith. Many times we look at these things with earthly thinking and human perspectives. If this were the Son of God, if this were the

Messiah, He would surely be born in a noble place—how could He be in Bethlehem, how could He be in a manger? But this group completely believed the message reported by the angels; they made no other guesses and did not view spiritual matters through worldly eyes. Too often we lack spiritual discernment; too often we measure the words of the Bible by earthly standards. In this way, we cannot understand God's intention at all. God was willing for His Son to have such a lowly birth, and yet this birth became the sign of the authority He would exercise in the future. Remember, the lower the position God gives us today, the greater will be the glory of the authority we will hold in the future.

Verse 17-18: “Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

These words all go against our usual experience, yet these shepherds faithfully spread God's message just as it was. No matter how people heard it—with astonishment or disbelief—they knew whom they believed in; they had heard the announcement directly from the angels themselves.

Verse 19: “But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

Indeed, Mary was truly a maid whom God could use; she was humble and gentle, and she obeyed every will of God in her life. Although many times God did not speak the whole message completely, and sometimes even gave revelation to a group of shepherds who had no direct connection with her, what these shepherds said, when she heard it, she treasured in her heart and pondered over it repeatedly. This is something we must learn to do.

Many times, when we read the Bible, there are words we read that we seem to understand but not fully; it's as if we see a glimpse of glory, yet it is not clear. We should learn from Mary, who treasured these words in her heart and pondered

them repeatedly; when the time came, God caused these words to shine and become guiding words for her. Mary, through her conversation with these shepherds, strengthened her faith. And what about these shepherds?

Verse 20: “Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”

May God help us, on the one hand, to be like this group of shepherds, faithfully caring for the flock God has entrusted to us, so that at the very moment we fulfill our duties, God may bring to us the message of great joy. On the other hand, may we learn to be like Mary, willing to treasure in our hearts every word we hear concerning Christ and to ponder them repeatedly, allowing these words to become guidance that helps us and leads us in our daily lives.

Let us pray together: Lord, please help me. May every matter in my life today be led and guided by Your Word. Help me so that as I live each day, I may increasingly align with Your will. Thank You. I pray this in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.