

Small Group Discussion Guide

Fear Not: Good News of Great Joy for All People

Sermon Summary

The Christmas story centers on four powerful two-word phrases announced by angels to shepherds: Fear Not. Good News. Great Joy. All People. God intentionally chose marginalized shepherds—considered unclean, uneducated, and unnoticed—to be the first to hear about Jesus' birth. This wasn't an accident; it was God's way of declaring that nobody is too small, too broken, or too far gone. The Good News is that Jesus came not just to be with us, but to take things away—our sin, shame, strongholds, and fear of death. True joy springs from gratitude for what God has done, not from our circumstances. Christmas announces that salvation is for everyone.

Icebreaker Question

What's the most memorable two-word phrase you've ever heard (or said) that changed something significant in your life?

Discussion Questions

1. Fear Not: Living in God's Hands

Read [Luke 2:8-10](#). The angels' first words were "Fear Not," and the sermon pointed out this is the command Jesus gives more than any other in the Gospels. The pattern is clear: fear is followed by favor, trembling is followed by truth. What specific fear or anxiety are you carrying right now? How does the truth that "perfect love casts out fear" ([1 John 4:18](#)) speak to that situation?

2. Good News: What He Brings and Takes Away

Mike said in his sermon last weekend, "The MORE we are after is all wrapped up in LESS." Jesus came not only to give us life but to take things away—sin, shame, strongholds, addictions, fear of death. Read [Romans 3:22-24](#). What is something you need Jesus to "take away" from your life this Christmas season? What keeps you from fully believing that He can and will do this?

3. Great Joy: Gratitude Over Circumstances

The message made a provocative claim: "It's not joy that makes us grateful; it's gratitude that makes us joyful." This flips our normal assumption that we'll be grateful once we feel joyful. Instead, it suggests gratitude is the doorway to joy, not the result of it.

Think about a difficult season you've walked through—maybe one where joy felt impossible. Looking back, can you identify any moments where you chose gratitude despite your circumstances? What happened internally when you did? What form did that gratitude take—prayer? Worship? Journaling? Meditation?

4. All People: God's Intentional Choice

God chose shepherds—the overlooked, the ordinary, the outsiders, those who were "always behind, always left out, always on the outside looking in"—to be the first to hear the Good News. Why do you think he shared it with them first? Have you ever felt like a shepherd—marginalized, forgotten, or "not good enough" for God? Has God ever revealed something to you first, before others in your family or friendship circle because of that?

5. The Lamb of God: Divine Poetry

Mike highlighted the beautiful irony that shepherds who tended sacrificial lambs were told to find a baby "wrapped in swaddling cloths"—the same way they would wrap spotless lambs destined for temple sacrifice. This baby would become "the Lamb of God." Read [John 1:29](#). How does understanding Jesus as both the Good Shepherd AND the sacrificial Lamb deepen your appreciation for what Christmas really means? How do the stories of Christmas and Easter intersect in the Christian message for you?

Prayer Requests

As we close our time together, pick one of the requests below as your prayer request and pray for each other:

- **For Freedom from Fear:** Pray for courage to cast an anxiety on God, trusting that He cares deeply about what matters to us. Ask God to help the "fear of the Lord" quiet all other fears.
- **For Grateful Hearts:** Pray that gratitude would transform our perspective and produce great joy, regardless of a certain circumstance. Ask God to help us daily celebrate who He is and what He has done.

- **For the Overlooked:** Pray for those who are like shepherds—marginalized, forgotten, on the outside looking in. Ask God to reveal His love to those who feel "too broken" or "too far gone" for the Good News.
- **For Salvation:** Pray for people in our lives who need to hear and believe that Jesus came for them—that they might accept an invitation to our Christmas services and that they would place their faith in Christ and be made right with God through the Good News of Christmas.