

## The Gift

On Sunday we began a new sermon series called “Voices of Angels,” in which we will study the messages that angels delivered in various Bible stories and apply those messages to ourselves, starting with some of the Christmas passages.

1. Warm-up Question: At the outset of his sermon, Jeff shared a favorite Christmas memory from his childhood. What’s one of your favorite Christmas memories?
2. Angels have appeared in many different stories in the Bible and down through the ages. Jeff shared a story about an angel appearing when gospel pianist Anthony Burger died on stage in 2006.
  - a. Do you believe in angels? Why or why not?
  - b. Have you ever encountered an angel or known someone who did? What happened? What do you imagine angels look like?
3. Read Luke 2:8-20.
  - a. Re-read verse 9, then tell how you picture the scene depicted there. What did the angel of the Lord look like? What does it mean when it says “the glory of the Lord shone around them”? Why were they terrified?
  - b. Re-read verses 13-14. Again, describe how you picture the scene depicted here. What impact do you think this scene had on the shepherds?
4. On Sunday, our focus was on the specific “good news for all people” that the angel of the Lord shared with the shepherds. That news is summarized in verse 11, “***Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ, the Lord.***” Most of us have learned to think of salvation as being primarily about getting into heaven in the life to come. And that certainly is an important part of salvation. But there’s so much more to “being saved” than just that, as the two key terms the angel used to describe our Savior make clear. Those two terms are: (a) the Christ; and (b) the Lord. First let’s explore “Christ.”

The Old Testament Hebrew word *mashiyach* [maw-SHEE-akh], transliterated into English as “Messiah,” means “one who is anointed.” This word was used in ancient Hebrew to refer generally to kings and more specifically to an ultimate king God would eventually send to set everything right and usher in a Golden Age. The New Testament Greek word for “anointed one” is *christos*, which transliterates into English as Christ. The New Testament uses *christos* to refer to the ultimate King/Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

- a. For a classic example of the kind of Kingdom the Messiah was expected to create, read Isaiah 11:1-9. What does this passage tell us about what the Messianic Golden Age will be like?

- b. Luke 16:20 says, “Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God [i.e., the Messianic Golden Age] was coming, and he answered, ‘The Kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” For, in fact, the Kingdom of God is within you.’” According to this verse, where and how does the Messianic Golden Age begin?
- c. Read John 10:10, 14:27, and 7:37-38, then describe what it looks like when the Kingdom of God (i.e., the Messianic Golden Age) is fully activated inside one of us?
- d. Jeff said, “When enough of us have begun to experience the Messianic Golden Age inside of us, then maybe the Messianic Golden Age will break out in the world around us.” Do you buy that? Why or why not?
- e. Regardless when or how the Messianic Golden Age is eventually inaugurated in this world, it is inaugurated within us as we learn about Jesus, internalize his values, and draw on his strength more and more. How close are you to fully realizing the Kingdom of God within you? Where would you place yourself on the following scale? Explain your answer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Barely begun			Halfway there				Almost there!		

- f. Jeff said his next “growing edge” (to get closer to his own personal Golden Age) is to learn to practice what Jesus taught in Luke 10:38-42 about balancing work and enjoyment. What’s your next growing edge? What are you doing to address it?
5. The second term the angel used in Luke 2:11 to describe our Savior is the Greek word *Kurios* [KOO-ree-os], which means “one who has authority over me; the one who’s in charge.” Jeff said, “To “save our lives,” i.e., live well, each of us needs someone in our life with the authority to say, ‘No, you can’t do that.’”
- a. Read Luke 6:46 and Luke 14:27. What do you get from these verses? What’s Jesus trying to say?
  - b. Realizing our personal Golden Age requires commitment to something greater than ourselves, even when that requires us to act contrary to our narrow self-interest. Can you think of an example of a time in your life when you felt called to do something that required significant sacrifice? Did you do it? If so, why? How did it turn out? Are you glad you did it?
  - c. Read Mark 8:35. What’s this verse trying to say? What’s the benefit of living sacrificially?

***As we celebrate this Christmas Season, let’s give thanks for the gift of Jesus, who saves our lives when we allow him to be both our Messiah and our Lord.***