

**Dec 24, 2021**

**7pm**

**Charlie Brown: Finding the True Meaning of Christmas**

*Luke 2:8-14*

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field,  
keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord  
shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold,

I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,  
which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the babe wrapped  
in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

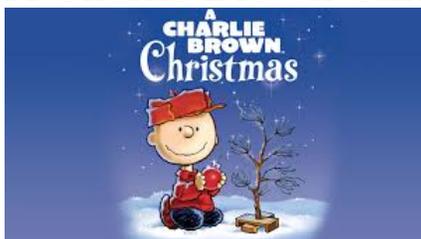
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host  
praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward all.

Tonight we conclude our preaching series on the REEL CHRISTMAS  
where we've seen the gifts of joy, peace, hope & love revealed  
through beloved Christmas movies and specials.

To see and experience the love and impact of our Newborn King  
revealed in surprising & unexpected ways is a gift we opened each  
week & tonight receive a final gift through the classic—

A Charlie Brown Christmas.



Now friends, I have seen this wonderfully relatable and hope-filled  
Christmas special every year since I was probably 4 years old!

That was before BluRay, Netflix and other streaming services.

For all those a bit younger with us tonight,  
You looked in an ancient scroll called a TV Guide...  
And you saw what night the special-A Charlie Brown Christmas  
Was going to be on TV & everyone gathered around in excitement.

There were no re-runs. There was no recording it on a VCR.  
Or Renting on Demand or Streaming it.  
You miss it and you wait an entire year to see it again.

In this great animated show, the Peanuts gang is up to their usual antics,  
Charlie Brown is sad and not feeling particularly happy at Christmas.  
He **wants** to feel happy, sees everyone else enjoying themselves,  
but he can't join in.

He seeks advice from Lucy and winds up becoming the director  
of the Christmas play.

But things still don't work out—he sees all the glitz and glamour  
of “commercial” Christmas and feels discouraged.

So Charlie Brown figures a Christmas Tree will help set the mood  
for the true meaning of Christmas,  
so he searches and only finds a little, withered wooden tree.

Of course everyone hates it and makes fun of Charlie Brown,  
which all leads to the powerful question he cries out in frustration,  
“Can anyone tell me what Christmas is all about?”

And boy, isn't this just SO relatable for us right here, right now too?

Sometimes amid all the hustle and bustle of the season  
its easy to lose sight of why we're celebrating.

Its easy to get distracted by all the glitter and glitz  
leading up to Christmas Day.

We can get absorbed in a shopping frenzy and  
A gift giving and receiving obsession,  
spurred on by our consumeristic culture  
and full-out advertising blitz of the season.

I know we can resonate with the frustration and mixed messages  
Of the holiday season, and ask the same question  
As our beleaguered Charlie Brown:  
“Can anyone tell me what Christmas is all about?”

And this is where Linus steps in.

Now Linus has been pretty quiet so far,  
But now, when his friend Charlie Brown needs to know  
what Christmas is all about, he knows its his time to speak.

Holding his ever faithful and comforting blue blanket,  
Linus steps into the spotlight and delivers  
the angelic announcement of Jesus’ birth to the Shepherds from Lk 2.

It wasn’t just prophetic—it was pure genius!  
Charles Schultz got into more homes in the US than most churches  
And reminded us of what Christmas is all about.

Tonight I want to focus on just one thing that can be so easily missed  
In Linus’ scene.

Linus actually drops his beloved blanket.



Friends, this NEVER happens in any other of the Peanuts stories.  
Linus and his blanket are inseparable...its his security!

But in this one poignant moment, when he utters those beautiful words from Lk 2:10, “**Fear not** for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (KJV)

Linus drops his security blanket exactly after saying the words, “fear not.”

The arrival of Jesus Christ into the world brings to each of us the gift of peace.



~Peace even in the midst of a world that far too often causes distress and great fear.

~Peace even as we deal with the ongoing uncertainty of the COVID pandemic wreaking havoc around us & the world.

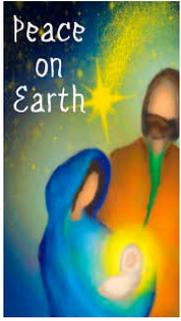
~Peace no matter what we may be dealing with in our families, Or in our schools or our jobs.

\*The world around Linus had not changed much in that moment. All that caused him to clutch his blanket with such anxiety Was still very present...

BUT when he focused on the presence of Jesus in the world, He found his fears less troubling.

I believe he found true peace at that “drop the blanket” moment.

THIS...this is the gift of Christmas my friends...



Despite all that may cause us fear...God is with us...  
Right now at this very moment.

Christmas reminds us that our peace and hope and joy and love  
Was born so long ago in a manger... "For God so loved us...  
That God gave us a Savior...who is Christ the Lord!"

We too can have these "drop the blanket" moments every time  
We focus upon the true reason for the season...  
And allow Jesus Christ to be born anew in our hearts & lives.

The moment that Charlie Brown heard the story of Jesus from Linus,  
His whole view of Christmas changed.

He suddenly knew the true meaning of Christmas,  
and it wasn't the presents, the lights or the parties;  
but the message of joy that the angels gave about Jesus...  
And it was that message that also brought all his friends together.

The show ends with the Peanuts gang not just singing,  
but clearly and unquestionably singing in worship.



Even the musical style at this point is different from anything else  
Heard previously.

The obvious song choice here could have been “O Christmas Tree”,  
The notes of which have already been playing gently in the background.  
But the focus is no longer the tree.

The focus is Jesus.

With this new focus, all the kids instead slide effortlessly into  
“Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Glory to the Newborn King!”

And what we are now witnessing in this beautiful, animated classic,  
Is essentially an impromptu worship service!

Linus and friends have moved from speaking truth and hearing truth  
To a more active listening for that deep, Spirit-filled truth  
That moves them in a deeper place of worship.

Their joy-filled response to the newborn king is much like those shepherds  
Who were instructed to “fear not” so very long ago.



Theologian Howard Thurman said that the work of Christmas begins  
When we find the lost, heal the broken  
Bring peace among people and  
help to make music in the heart.

The true reason for the season—peace, joy, love and hope—  
Is born again and again in our hearts and lives when we focus upon  
Jesus Christ, our Newborn King  
And find ways to share His Light and Love to all.  
May it be so. Amen and Amen.

# The Work of Christmas

**When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:**

**To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among others,  
To make music in the heart.**      *Howard Thurman*