

In 1965, A Charlie Brown Christmas was first shown on TV.

Charles Schulz, the creator of Peanuts, was determined to include a narrative of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Charlie Brown is the frustrated director of a children's Christmas play.

He is discouraged by an uncooperative cast and by the commercialism of the season, and he asks, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"

Linus Van Pelt replies, "Sure Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about." and using the King James version of the bible, Linus recites [Luke 2:8-14](#)

(8) And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field,

keeping watch over their flock by night.

(9) 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.

(10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

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

(12) And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

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

(14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Linus concludes by saying, "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown."

The verse that we will pivot around is the last one, which in the King James Version [KJV] reads

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

PRAY

We begin with a controversy concerning the best Greek manuscripts.

I have never studied Greek and am utterly unqualified to wade into the controversy.

But it appears that a very minor alteration of the Greek would have our verse read

"Glory to God in the highest, & on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" English Standard Version [ESV]

The ESV communicates that God's peace is for those with whom he is pleased.

The KJV communicates that God's offers peace and good will to all men.

I blithely offer that either translation works for me.

Ultimately, that is upon your death, it will be clear that God's peace is for those with whom He is pleased.

The ESV communicates a sobering truth.

However, **if** in our passage the angels have the **gospel** in mind, which seems plausible to me given verse 10 then the good news for which they are praising God does indeed extend toward all men.

(10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you **good tidings** of great joy, which shall be to all people.

So for purposes of this sermon, I am going to lean toward that understanding of the text.

In v10, the angel says that he is bringing good tidings KJV
good news ESV

The word 'gospel' means good news.

& the gospel good news in 3 words is: **God saves sinners.**

I will provide add'l gospel details shortly, Lord willing.

But first I need to back up a step.

The very first good news,
that which is foundational to the good news of the gospel,
is that **God made you**.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Your Creator is not confused about your gender,
and neither should you be.

Identify as God made you
and you will be spared much grief.

Psalms 139:13-14 For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
(14) I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

*You are not a byproduct
of molecular randomness, mutation, and natural selection.*

It is foolish to think,
that given enough time,
and given enough planets and stars,
that life would eventually emerge somewhere,
and evolve into what we see about us today.

Only a mind determined to do away with deity
would entertain such foolishness.

You say, "That's too harsh."
(& preacher's must take care not to be gratuitously harsh)
Psalm 14:1

The **fool** says in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,
there is none who does good.

You are not a byproduct
of molecular randomness, mutation, and natural selection.

You are the product of intelligent design,
in fact, omniscient and omnipotent design,
all knowing and all powerful design.

You did not emerge from primordial soup.

Darwin proposed in a letter to a friend
that Earth's original blend of gases
produced a "broth" of organic molecules
which when exposed to light and heat
eventually formed the building blocks of life.

NONSENSE

What a travesty
that many educational institutions
teach that man has evolved
from soup to primates to what he is today.

Is it any surprise that some of those so informed
"grow up" to behave like their supposed ancestors ...
acting like creatures of instinct ... unreasoning animals?

You are not a byproduct
of molecular randomness, mutation, and natural selection.

The very first good news is that **God made you**
... in His image, no less.

Humanity shares many of God's attributes,
and you were created to image God,
to reflect His perfect character
in righteousness and holiness.

You have attributes that animals do not.

You are spiritual, you possess a moral compass,
you appreciate justice,
you are creative,
you show love, grace, and mercy.

These attributes are not possessed by animals
and cannot be attributed to evolutionary processes.

We have a pure-bred German Shepherd
and a pure-bred Golden Retriever.

My wife loves her dogs ... and I am often fond of them.

I am the morning person, and I let them out and in,
after which they get a treat ... the shepherd Koda first,
then the golden Copper.

And if the Copper's treat slips out of my hands to the floor,
the shepherd does not look at me and say
"sharing is caring ... that one is Copper's,
I have had mine".

No, Koda snaps up that wayward treat in an instant and Copper looks hopefully to me to try again.

Clearly, you have attributes that animals do not.

You were created in the image of God.

The very first good news is that **God made you.**

A brief rabbit chase if I may: there are some preoccupied with discovering alien life.

I suspect that one of the motives is to buttress the notion that life can evolve from molecular randomness, mutation, and natural selection.

Don't waste your time in the hunt for alien life.

I am not saying that there are not UAPs, or unidentified aerial phenomena, unexplainable sights in the sky,

Apparently, the planet Venus is often mistaken for a UAP.

There are natural atmospheric phenomena.

There are man-made airborne objects from spacecraft to drones, some in use, some abandoned and simply clutter.

And if a natural explanation is not the cause, then I propose a supernatural explanation, namely the activity of angels.

Hebrews 1:14 *Angels* Are ~~they not all~~ ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Angels have a lot to do, they are very active, and we know that there are times when they leave visible evidence of their activity.

You will recall that Syria was warring against Israel, and Elisha the prophet was warning the king of Israel of the Syrian plans, and the king of Syria was determined to seize this source of military intelligence.

The narrative is very gripping.

2 Kings 6:15-17

(15) When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city.

And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

(16) He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

(17) Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Now that must have been some aerial phenomena!

Letting go the rabbit of alien life, we proceed ...

The first good news is that **God made you.**

You are not a byproduct of molecular randomness, mutation, and natural selection, and I wouldn't lay awake at night concerned that such exist.

But then there is bad news: **You have sinned.**

You have sinned against your holy Creator and that sin carries stiff penalties that must be paid.

The image of God in man was grotesquely marred by Adam's sin.

God made you, but you have not loved Him with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

You have repeatedly done what He has forbidden and you have repeatedly neglected what He requires.

You were born a sinner in bondage to the power and penalty of sin.

And the penalty is terrifyingly severe and eternal.

This is bad news. This is the worst possible news.

You have sinned.

But now comes the gospel, the very best news.

God saves sinners.

And this good news of God, that He saves sinners, is sincerely and everlastingly proclaimed to all men, without exception.

What makes me say so?

Revelation 14:6

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.

There are various understandings of eschatology among Protestants.

My understanding is amillennial and from that position this verse is applicable to the entire church age, the time from the resurrection of Christ until His return, the millennium.

The amillennial position does not hold that there is no millennium, which you might infer from the label.

Rather, it holds that we are in the millennium.

But I am hopeful that whatever your eschatological position, you will see from Rev 14:6 that the gospel is **everlastingly proclaimed to all men**, without exception.

The good news, that God saves sinners has its roots in eternity past.

1 Peter 1:20a He (that is Christ) was foreknown before the foundation of the world

The incarnation of Christ is a redemptive milestone that emanates from a redemptive purpose formed by the Triune God in eternity past and forever applicable to all the sons of men.

What choice did the angels have but to rejoice at this redemptive milestone?

When God laid the foundations of the earth, the angels sang together and shouted for joy (Job 38:7).

And roughly 4,000 years or 76 generations later when God fulfilled His promise that the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel (i.e. God with us) ...

What choice did the angels have but to glorify God for His grace toward men?

The eruption and outburst were unstoppable!

The good news, that God saves sinners is sincerely offered to all men, to men of every nation and subgroups within nations, and that gospel offer applies from Adam to the last soul conceived.

God saves sinner, there is no better news.

If time allows and the Lord wills, we will take a quick peek at how the gospel was understood before the birth of Christ.

But closing out our use of Rev 14:6, the good news, that God saves sinners is sincerely offered to all men, to men of every nation and all subgroups within nations.

However, while the good news is proclaimed to all men not all men receive the good news.

This is a tragic reality.

Some do not receive it because they are not cognitively able.

They did not survive the womb, or they died in infancy or at so early an age as to not have developed the ability receive the gospel, or they lived to adult age but had cognitive challenges rendering them unable to receive the gospel.

The elect among such ones
are still saved by the shed blood of Christ,
but apart from repentance and faith
as they were never able to receive the gospel.

I believe that there are billions of such ones,
even tens of billions,
but this sermon is not for them
by our definition of the group.

*The rest of us
are responsible to hear the good news and receive it.*

Some receive it, by God's grace, and are faithful.

They are with the Lord and die in the Lord.

But some men do not receive that which is proclaimed,
and are not with the Lord, and die in their sins.

You are in one group or the other.

You either die in the Lord or die in your sins.

Which group are you in?

You say, "Well I'm not sure."

I say, sort it out!

You have no higher priority!

Have you received the good news of the gospel?

By receive I mean 'take in',
'associate yourself with'.

If you hear the gospel and neglect it,
then you have not received it.

You heard the good news, that God saves sinners,
but you did not absorb it to the point
where it had any abiding impact on your life.

You did not receive it.

You did not advance out of darkness and into light.

*Imagine that you are an American football wide receiver,
perhaps even a tight end,
as one is often in the news with his companion troubadour.*

The QB throws you a pass.

If you catch that ball
and envelop it in the bread basket
you have received it and the ball advances down the field.

If you drop the ball, it hits you right in the hands
but tumbles to the ground
you have not received it.

There is no advance, just a missed opportunity,
a loss of down.

If that dropped pass falls to the ground
then those that care about you groan
while those against you, the demons and their leader,
rejoice.

I care about you.

I plead with you, **Do not drop the gospel of God!**

Receive it.

Pull it into the bread basket.

Let no one rip it away!

Football defenders are taught to claw at the ball received
and cause a fumble.

The demons do the same,
the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes do the same,
your pride does the same.

All are against your eternal well-being
and exert their influence that you may drop the gospel ball.

Receive it.

Pull it into the bread basket.

Let no one rip it away! ...

But alas, many drop the gospel ball.

If you die having never received the gospel,
it can be said that
"you died in your sins".

John 8:24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”

Makes sense, right?

If the gospel is that **God saves sinners**.

And you respond with ... bah, not interested, then you made no advance, and you lost a down, one less gospel opportunity for you.

And a great multitude carelessly let the gospel fall to the ground.

The bible has dozens of labels for them
unbelievers (2 Cor 6:15)
children of the devil (1 John 3:10)
the wicked (2 Thes 3:2)

<https://www.bible-topics.com/Titles-and-Names-of-the-Wicked.html>

“So what?”, you say.

“I don’t care if I die in my sins.”

“Sinners have much more fun.”

So what?! Wake Up!

The unbeliever is facing a liability they cannot begin to pay.

Isaiah 48:22 “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”

That is a terrifying truth.

“Scare tactics”, you say.

Yes!!

Fear is useful, and commanded.

“I want a God that doesn’t frighten anyone”, you say.

Such a God does not exist.

You can invent one ... it’s called idolatry.

The One true and ever living God says,

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

I unapologetically proclaim to you that the unbeliever is facing a liability they cannot begin to pay.

Isaiah 48:22 “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”

That is a truth that wakes me up at night and ushers me to prayer.

I am not worried for myself.

There are certain fears cast out by God for the believer.

I do not fear that God will forget His promises.

I do not fear that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is an insufficient propitiation for my sins.

And I do not fear that God is unable to complete the good work that He has begun in me.

Yes, important fears are removed for the believer by a gracious God.

And by the grace of God I have received the gospel and hold fast to it and I have been saved from the penalty and power of sin.

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

But there are many people that I care about that I fear are among the wicked.

Now, the gavel is not in my hand, nor do I possess the Lamb’s Book of Life, so I try to take care in presuming that I know the spiritual status of others.

But I have a bad feeling that many people I care about are at present among the wicked.

And that tempts me to anxiousness.

So, what do I do?

I pray and plead with God to save them by His grace.

How often do I do it?

Often, but no doubt less often than I should.

It is really nice being retired.

If I am up for a couple hours in the middle of the night,
I don't have to worry about getting to work on time
or whether I will have opportunity for a nap,
and that is a wonderful liberty.

So, insomnia provides opportunities for prayer.

And during my praying, I often try to remember
someone I interacted with during the day
and pray that God would save them.

The construction crew
that worked on the Tabornton bridge by my house.

The lady who gives me my packages at the post office.

The people who waited on me when I went out to eat.

Even once a stranger that I saw crossing the street
that looked like
they had the weight of the world on their shoulders,
being trailed by a toddler that could not keep up
and knew not what else to do but plead for mercy.

I remember people I grew up with,
people I went to school with,
people I worked with.

I don't want to know anyone
that ultimately dies in their sins
and spends eternity w/o a moments peace.

I even pray for politicians!

Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you,

Certainly not all politicians are servants of Satan,
but many of them are such accomplished liars
that you cannot help but see the family resemblance.

Politicians serving the Father of lies, doing his bidding,
and heading for an eternity sharing his fate.

It's irritating suffering the consequences of their unbelief,
but it's even worse imagining the torment that awaits them
if they ultimately die in their sins.

So, I pray that God will save them,
and then ask Him to forgive me
for any insincerity in my request.

Isaiah 5:20-21

(20) Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

(21) Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!

Isaiah 10:1,3

(1) Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees,
and the writers who keep writing oppression,

(3) What will you do on the day of punishment,
in the ruin that will come from afar?

To whom will you flee for help,
and where will you leave your wealth?

Liars and grifters, swindlers and con artists.

Their part is in the Lake of Fire,
unless they receive the gospel and repent.

And I pray that they do.

Isaiah 48:22 "There is no peace," says the LORD,
"for the wicked."

Proverbs 13:15b the way of the treacherous is their ruin.

Proverbs 13:15b the way of transgressors is hard. KJV

And that's what makes us handle Luke 2:14 with care.

(14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. KJV

can have the whiff of God saving everyone from the penalty and power of sin.

(14) "Glory to God in the highest, & on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" ESV

makes it clear that not all are saved

Now I'm not sure what the right rendering of this text is.

But I am sure that the gospel is for everyone, but not everyone receives it, & only those that do please God and have eternal peace.

Further, I am sure that God is not in heaven, wringing His hands and fretting about any confusion Luke 2:14 may cause.

I think that He leaves such things in His Word that we might more earnestly strive to know Him.

By the grace of God, my wife is a terrific mother, and we had several babies.

And often she would lay out a baby blanket on a rug in front of the couch, and lay the baby upon it, and lay some toys just outside the baby's reach.

And the baby would wriggle and stretch and drool, and at first I thought, "well that's cruel".

And I am too old to remember for sure now, but I would not be surprised if I moved a toy to within reach when mom wasn't looking.

But mom straightened me out.

She was not teasing the baby, but encouraging the baby to develop.

I suspect that God does the same with us.

Are you perplexed by something in God's Word? Wriggle and stretch and drool and He will bless you.

Regrouping

The very first good news is that **God made you.**

But then, bad news: **You have sinned.**

But now comes the gospel, the very best news.

God saves sinners.

God sincerely offers peace to all men on His terms as presented in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some men do not receive God's terms and the transfer of peace is aborted.

Some men appear to receive God's terms but do not stand in (or hold fast to) God's terms and the transfer of peace is aborted.

Some men receive and stand in (or hold fast to) God's terms and the transfer of peace is consummated.

The consummated transfer of peace involves an offer, and an acceptance, and perseverance.

Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. KJV

This rendering suits the gospel offer.

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, & on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" ESV

This rendering suits the gospel offer accepted with perseverance.

I am not sure which the angels are declaring in Luke 2:14.

I am sure that they are not declaring that God is at peace with men on men's terms.

That would be ridiculous.

God is God because He calls the shots.

Men are men because they do not.

There was an angel that tried to call the shots.

He has been overpowered.

He has been conquered.

The war is not yet finished, but the outcome is certain.

The wicked are those
who do not receive and persevere in God's terms.

Now, about God's terms, about the gospel

I have summarized the gospel with the phrase,
God saves sinners.

Let's drill a layer deeper.

How does God save sinners?

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

(1) Now I would remind you, brothers,
of the gospel I preached to you,
which you received, in which you stand,

(2) and by which you are being saved,
if you hold fast to the word I preached to you
—unless you believed in vain.

(3) For I delivered to you as of first importance
what I also received:
that **Christ died for our sins**
in accordance with the Scriptures,

(4) that **he was buried**,
that **he was raised on the third day**
in accordance with the Scriptures,

Now we have the good news of the gospel in **15 words**.

Will you receive these words ... or will you drop them?

If you have been paying attention,
then you realize
that for the gospel to be good news to you,
you first have to believe that God made you.

So, you mull that over.

"Isn't that a myth?", you say.

"Isn't that what uneducated people think?"

"Isn't religion at the foundation of many wars?"

At the same time,
I am confident that you possess a small voice that says,
"God made you."

It's not so much
that I need to convince you that God made you
as it is that I need to persuade you
not to bury that truth
because you don't like the ramifications.

And what is the obvious ramification?

Listen to that small voice that says, "God made you",
and the logic God gave you cries out,

"If God made me, then I answer to Him."

Bingo!

Well reasoned.

God did indeed make you
and you do indeed answer to Him.

That bothers people because people hate accountability
and cherish control.

And once you have acquired some control,
or at least you think you have,
then you don't want to give up that illusion.

Further, under the illusion that you have control,
you may have developed your own moral code
that you are not willing to part with.

A moral code that rips at the gospel ball.

Perhaps under your moral code,
all intimacy between consenting adults is permissible
and off limits to censure?

with the age of adulthood here ever pressured downward.

Perhaps under your moral code,
a woman's body is her domain
and she may terminate viable pregnancies if she so wills,
without any negative consequences?

"Her body, her choice," you cry out
with all the zeal of the Ephesian idolators (Acts 19:28).

We could multiply scenarios.

Whatever your moral code may be,
perhaps the idea
of abandoning it for the bible's moral code
is grossly unappealing?

So, you convince yourself that there is a choice:
A) God made me, and His moral code applies to me.
B) God did not make me, and I decide a moral code.

And you choose B.

But wishing God away is less than useless.

God did indeed make you
and you do indeed answer to Him
... and you know it.

Burying that truth under the sophistries of humanism
or the pleasures of hedonism
may yield temporary satisfaction
but ends in spiritual death
and eternal banishment from the blessings of your Creator.

Dying you will surely die.

And fast upon your last breath
your deepest fears will come upon you. (Prov. 10:24)

You will stand before a holy judge
w/o advocate or valid excuse for your sinful record.

You have no control, and you are doomed.

God made you.

You have sinned.

But glory be to His name. **God saves sinners.**

Christ died for our sins.

He was buried.

He was raised on the third day.

All praise be to God for His redemption of fallen men!

*Now, what does the Bible mean
when it says that **Christ died for our sins?***

1 John 3:5 You know that He appeared
in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin.

So the angels in Luke
are rejoicing at the appearance
of the One who came to take away sin.

First, by appeared the Bible means became man.

God with us.

Second, though having taken on flesh, He never sinned.

He never did what the Father forbids
and He always did what the Father required,
in thought, word, and deed.

Then, the sinless Son of God

1 Peter 2:24 ~~He himself~~ bore our sins in his body
on the tree,
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.
By his wounds you have been healed.

The sins of all who would put their trust in Him,
were attached to the sinless Jesus Christ.

The bad news, that **You have sinned**,
was wiped off of your record and put on His record.

Not by your power.

It was not your idea.

It was the work of God.

Colossians 2:13-14

(13) And you, who were dead in your trespasses
and the uncircumcision of your flesh,
God made alive together with him,
having forgiven us all our trespasses,

(14) by canceling the record of debt that stood against us
with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Wow,

I said earlier that sin carries stiff penalties
that must be paid.

That's why the fact we have sinned is such bad news.

God's Word says the person who sins will die (Ez. 18:20).

We were on a death march,
but God took our record of debt from us
and attached it to His Son Jesus Christ.

The legal demands against us, which must be executed,
were carried out against another.

And when that was finished, our trespasses were forgiven.

What should your disposition be
towards the one that paid
and therefore canceled your record of debt?

*But it is not merely that our record of debt was canceled,
no.*

Assets have been put in our account.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake
He (Father) made Him (Son) to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in Him (Son)
we might become the righteousness of God.

Woah.

Not only has our debt been paid,
but we are credited with the righteousness of Christ,
the sinless One.

Was there ever better news?

Where once we had nothing but debt, we now have assets.

This sounds too good to be true.

Preacher,
are you sure that the Son of God died on the cross?

Yes, our passage says,

**Christ died for our sins.
He was buried.**

The believer is only forgiven
if the sin bearer died in his place
and Jesus the sin bearer was truly dead and buried.

But then you wonder ... "did it work?"

"Was the sacrifice of Christ acceptable to God?"

"Is the believer
truly free from the penalty and power of sin?"

Yes!

**Christ died for our sins.
He was buried.
He was raised on the third day.**

That's the gospel good news in 15 words.

And that makes the redemption milestone
of the resurrection of Christ
the single most monumental event in human history.

1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ has not been raised,
your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

But **He was raised on the third day.**

Acts 2:22-24

(22) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth,
a man attested to you by God
with mighty works and wonders and signs
that God did through him in your midst,
as you yourselves know—

(23) this Jesus, delivered up
according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God,
you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

(24) God raised him up,
loosing the pangs of death,
because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

**Christ died for our sins.
He was buried.
He was raised on the third day.**

These truths apply to all those who put their faith in Him.

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest,
& on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"
ESV

Many unbelievers delight in mocking religion.

And all but biblical Christianity
and OT Judaism are inventions of men.

And alas, Judaism waits for a Savior that already came,
making biblical Christianity the only complete truth.

But that irritates mockers even more.

How dare a religion claim to be complete truth.

Biblical Christianity does just that
and has an empty tomb for its validation.

**God made you.
You have sinned.
God saves sinners.**

**Christ died for our sins.
He was buried.
He was raised on the third day.**

There is no gooder news, will you receive it and take it in?

Let's pray.