

Luke 2:10-14 + Alone + Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY
Festival of the Nativity: Christmas Eve + 24 December 2017

When you think of Christmas, what words come to mind? Decorations? Carols? Cookies? Presents? Snow? Jesus? I hope so about that last one, but what about the word “alone”? “Alone” is probably one of the last words you want to think about on Christmas. You won’t find Hallmark movies or Christmas songs that talk about how great it is to be “alone” for Christmas. Instead many Hallmark movies and many Christmas songs are all about not being “alone” for Christmas. They speak to the yearning that many of us feel this time of year. “I don’t want to be alone for Christmas!”

Why do we feel that way? Why do we not want to be alone on Christmas? Of course, no one likes to feel lonely. Yet there are other deeper reasons, aren’t there? Sorrow over what you once had and what you don’t have any longer. A broken heart over a relationship that has ended. Pain caused by the hurtful words or loveless actions of a loved one or friend. Grief over the loss of a loved one. All of us have had that kind of experience at some point in our lives whether recently or years ago. That’s why this time of year is often so emotional. Left on our own we end up dwelling on why we’re alone.

Yet even if you’re celebrating Christmas surrounded by beloved family and friends or with a spouse or significant other by your side or simply celebrating here surrounded by your fellow believers, that empty feeling of “alone” can still linger. While you might not be physically alone, you may still feel spiritually alone. The feelings of joy and love being with family and friends at Christmas often last until the holiday weekend is over and then you go back to life as usual. Even with family and friends, deep down in your soul, you feel alone. You recognize that something or Someone is missing.

Why is that? Why do you feel like Someone is missing even when you’re surrounded by loved ones? We can trace that natural loneliness, that God-shaped hole that we all have back to our first parents, Adam and Eve. When God created them, they were complete. They had a perfectly whole relationship with God, but when Satan told them that they didn’t need God, that they could be like God on their own, they broke that perfect relationship with God. They were left alone with their sin, their guilt, their sorrow, their grief. They were left alone to face God’s holy condemnation for their sin. They were left alone with hearts broken by sin, and they passed that brokenness, that loneliness from God on to their kids and to every generation after them.

While each of us may have our own personal reasons why we don’t want to be alone for Christmas, you can see how it all comes back to that natural loneliness we have being separated from our God and his love for us. You and I have a whole lifetime of guilt that separates us from our God, a God who rightly should abandon us to our guilt, to the consequences of our sins, to death—the rightful wages of sin, and even to the eternal fires of hell.

...But our God doesn’t leave us alone. He doesn’t abandon us. He doesn’t turn his back on us and leave us to the eternal consequences of our sin. He didn’t leave Adam and Eve alone, but gave them the promise we heard earlier. He told Satan, ***“I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.”*** (Genesis 3:15) Adam and Eve weren’t the only ones.

The Lord didn’t leave Noah alone or Abraham or Moses and the Israelites or King David or any of his people, including Mary and Joseph or those lonely shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem. In fact, those shepherds were the first ones to hear that God had come to fulfill his ancient promise to lonely Adam and Eve. A heaven-sent angel gave them the news. ***“Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*** And suddenly they weren’t alone anymore as the hosts of heaven praised God who had come to fill the loneliness of our souls. ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests!”***

Our God came into our world, taking on our humanity—our flesh, our experience to fill your loneliness, to bind your broken heart, to heal your pain, to dry your tears, to cleanse your guilt, to be your brother, to be ***“Immanuel”***—“God with us.” (Isaiah 7:14) The God who had promised to crush Satan’s power came to fulfill that promise as our Savior, yet as our Savior and as our God, Jesus came into our world to face our “alone” alone.

When you’re alone or feeling lonely, one way to push that loneliness aside is not to go it alone, but to enjoy the company of family and friends and loved ones. But when Jesus came into our world, “alone” was a very important word in his divine job description as Savior. There was no one else who could do what Jesus came to do. No

other human being in all of human history from creation to the end of time could do, can do, or will be able to do what Jesus came to do. He had to face our “alone” alone.

Jesus alone had to fulfill all of the prophecies and promises of Scripture. When it came to fulfilling all of those prophecies laid out over thousands of years, no one except Jesus could fulfill every one of those prophecies from small details like the place where he was born and the family line he came from to big details like the work he would accomplish and the message he would proclaim. Jesus alone fulfilled those prophecies and promises. He alone could do that because he alone was truly God and also truly human, like us yet without sin. He alone as God’s one and only Son could live the holy life necessary to be your holy substitute under God’s holy Law and who could die the death that would pay for the guilt of every one of your sins. Jesus alone had to die for your sin and your guilt and face your death and your grave for you, but he alone had to also raise himself from the dead and abandon his tomb crushing death’s power over you forever.

Jesus alone had to conquer sin and temptation and death. That’s why he alone can fill your loneliness, dry your tears, bind your broken heart, cleanse your guilt, and give you life. No one else can do that. I can’t do that for you. You can’t do that for yourself. Your loved ones, your friends, your family, your significant other—none of them can fill your “alone” the way that Jesus can.

So we go back to that good news proclaimed by the angel to those lonely shepherds out in the rolling hills outside of Bethlehem. There we see why “alone” is a good word to remember at Christmas time. Remember what the angel said? ***“Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*** Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior alone—and that message is revealed to us on the pages of Holy Scripture alone. You can’t find that saving truth, that good news, that message anywhere else.

There on those pages of Scripture you find the grace of God—the undeserved loving mercy of our God that went into action to save each of us. There you see how it fills your life with real joy and peace and comfort and hope through the Savior who came to fill your “alone” alone. There in Scripture you see that you can do absolutely nothing to earn God’s favor, to earn his mercy and love, to earn heaven or God’s forgiveness. Instead, you find there the good news that gives you life through faith alone in Christ our Savior. That’s the only good news that can heal us, dry our tears, put our broken hearts back together, and make us no longer “alone” when life or loved ones leave us alone.

“Alone” really isn’t such a bad word at Christmas time, is it? Yes, none of us naturally wants to be alone, but as Scripture alone tells us, Christ alone is our Savior alone because of God’s grace alone through faith in Christ alone. That message ultimately brings peace to your heart and mine. That message of the angel fills our “alone” in a way that nothing else and no one else can. That message of the angel fills our hearts with joy and praise like nothing else and no one else can. That’s why on this Christmas night, we join the hosts of heaven praising our God who sent his one and only Son to be our Savior alone. ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests!”*** When this Christmas is long over, that thanks and praise to God alone can and will fill every aspect of your life. In Christ alone, you have the peace that fills your “alone” completely both now and forever. Amen.