

## The Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less

1. Our text yesterday was another "joy" passage in the Advent story: Luke 2.10.
2. "Good news" was a commonly-known Roman term for their rule imposed by their military dominance, and for Caesar's divinity.
3. So the angel is co-opting Roman terminology and applying it to Jesus and what will happen through Him (see also Mark 1.1 and Matthew 4.23 for the use of the same terminology to introduce Jesus).
4. The angel means to draw a stark contrast: what the prevailing powers and voices in the world call "good news" often isn't, and it is a great joy that Jesus will launch something wholly other.
5. Thus, as C. H. Spurgeon put it, Christianity ought to seem like a straight stick laid alongside the crooked stick of the world.
6. Roman "good news" was hardly good news for "all people."
7. A bunch of lowly, anonymous shepherds is the last group to whom you'd think the announcement of the promised Messiah would come; that choice exemplifies the angel's declaration: what Jesus launches includes absolutely everyone.
8. God's good news is literally big enough to include everyone; hallmarks of the lived gospel are countercultural diversity, inclusivity, opportunity, and equality.
9. Like the angel seeking out shepherds, we should seek out, enfold, and prioritize the so-called unimportant in fact, it's woven into Presbyterian identity; see The Belhar Confession, section 4, lines 2-3).
10. Thus, one of the ways we can succinctly summarize Christianity (our "elevator pitch") is that it's God's abnormal good news for literally everyone breaking into the world, and in time it will be the world's new normal, as Christ's Kingdom continues to grow, take shape, and one day with Christ's return be completed.



## **Supplemental Reading - On the Upside Down, New Normal of Christ**

From Leonard Sweet's, "Jesus Drives Me Crazy" (2003):

"There is a world and wisdom according to normal. There is a world and wisdom according to Jesus. The world according to normal is the world that is. Jesus is the abnormal one, and disciples of Jesus should be a deviation from the norm.

“Jesus messes up the world that is; He draws outside the lines, thinks outside the box, and resists typical solutions. Normal isn’t good enough for Him. He and His followers are the wisdom of the world to come...

“Everything Jesus taught goes against how normal people see things and function in the world; Jesus turned the world on its head.

“He taught that the way up is down, the way in is out, the way first is last, the way of success is service, the way of strength is weakness, the way of security is vulnerability, the way of justice is forgiveness, and the way of gaining is letting go... Want to be free? Be God’s obedient servant. Want to be great? Be least. Want to discover yourself? Forget yourself. Want honor? Be humble. Want to keep your life? Take courage and lose it for the right reasons...

“Here is the invitation of the gospel, and it’s at least a little bit scary: Jesus is your new normal, and the longer you live with Him, the more you leave the world that is behind, and become a whole new kind of person. Once you’ve encountered Jesus, you can’t just return to normal."

### **Prayer for the Week**

Adapted from The Presbyterian Outlook (12/20):

God, in this season of Advent, help us discern where You are already at work to renew and repair Your good but broken creation. Help us to trust that Your future, even now, is coming to realization in our midst. And help us to join together to rebuild and restore your world on the foundation of the justice You envision for us in Christ, amen.