

“It’s Hard to Keep Good News to Yourself”

Luke 2:8-14

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President Kennedy attended mass in Miami one Sunday. On his way out of church, the priest whispered in his ear, “I think you are doing a good job.” Kennedy replied, “You don’t have to whisper that kind of good news.”

Nobody was whispering the night Jesus was born. As a matter of fact, God sent an angel to announce his birth that was later joined by a heavenly choir to reinforce the good news.

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests’ ” Luke 2:8-14.

How did you announce the arrival of your children? Did you send out formal announcements with your baby’s picture? Did you pass out cigars? Did you put the announcement in the local paper or church newsletter? Did you tell everybody you saw, whether you knew them or not?

I suppose God trumped all of us. He sent angels to hover in the sky and announce the arrival of His son. Sounds like a proud Pappa to me!

Don’t you love to tell good news? I do. It’s fun and exciting to see the faces of people light up.

I saw this jubilant response to good news on three occasions last week. The first occurred when I walked into church a week ago and was told that Saddam Hussein had been captured, never again to terrorize his own citizens or others. People were smiling as they described his sudden capture, especially since no shots were fired or lives were lost.

On Tuesday evening, I watched on television as two hundred employees of the SAS Shoemakers in Pittsfield, Maine cried tears of joy and celebrated the good news of their Christmas bonuses. The manager of this small factory called the employees together for what some thought was a meeting to tell them of the plant’s closing. Instead, he told them that every employee would receive a Christmas bonus of one thousand dollars for each year he or she had been employed.

“We were all in shock and then the tears started flowing,” employee Lori Reynolds told CBS Correspondent Jim Acosta. Lawrence Wyman and his wife could hardly speak when they opened their envelopes and found checks for \$19,000 apiece.

Wednesday evening, I watched 20/20 hosted by Diane Sawyer. I saw thousands of South African children, many of whom were homeless or lived in orphanages, jumping up and down for joy when they were given Christmas presents of clothes and toys. Oprah Winfrey sponsored this Christmas extravaganza and personally handed out many of the packages. She and her entourage sat up a huge tent in twelve different locations to receive the children. Each child was fitted for a pair of tennis shoes and given clothes. Every girl

received a doll and each boy a soccer ball. In addition, all the children were fed a nutritious meal before leaving.

These three stories reminded me that Christmas and good news go together. Most of the time when we think of good news, though, we think of being the recipient and many times we are. Let me encourage you to turn this around. What good news could you share with family members and friends that would bring joy to their lives? What could you say to them that would put smiles on their faces and joy in their hearts? Let me give you some suggestions.

Begin with **compliments**. Point out specific things that people do well and let them know you appreciate their doing them. Let them know their good deeds make your life better. What a difference this will make in their confidence and self-esteem.

Share a word of **encouragement** with someone who is struggling. Many people are waiting for someone to give them a reason to keep on keeping on. You be the one.

Offer an **apology** to someone you offended. Say the words, "I am sorry." Make restitution and seek to renew the relationship.

Tell someone who has hurt you that you **forgive** him or her. Accept their apology. Bury the hatchet. Move on.

Tell someone that you are going to make some much needed and long overdue **changes** in your life. Tell them you are ready to take responsibility for your decisions and behavior and you are going to quit blaming others and looking for excuses. Tell them you are ready to say no to things that are harmful and yes to things that are good.

Be specific, tell them you want to be a better mate, parent, student, money manager, housekeeper, employer, employee, church member or a better citizen. Ask them to help you by praying for you and holding you accountable. Tell them in order to be a better person, you are going to seek God's help along with others. Tell them you are willing to go to counseling or be a part of a support group. Then step back and watch them smile and cry.

Tell someone you are willing to give him or her a **second chance**. Let them know you will be a part of their support group and biggest cheerleader. Tell them you believe in them and have confidence in their ability to change. Tell them you will pray for them and be there for them when the going is tough. How do you think the Prodigal Son felt when he heard the good news that he could come back home? Do that for somebody in your family this year.

Tell someone who is **reaching out** to you after your divorce or the death of your mate that you are ready to travel down a new road.

Tell your **parents** that you love and appreciate them.

Tell your **children** you are proud of them.

Tell someone what **Jesus** means to you and the difference he has made in your life. Share with them how you have come to know him personally and encourage them to begin developing their relationship with him, too.

Tell someone that you have **accepted** Jesus into your heart and want to be baptized. Tell them you want to be his faithful disciple.

Christmas and good news go together, don't they? What could you say to family members and friends that would bring them great joy? Give it some thought as we sing our final hymn and then ask God to help you communicate it to them. You may just become an angel in their eyes!

