



Our hope is that you were challenged by Sunday's message and would desire to take the study a little deeper. Whether for personal study, family study, or for a Home Group gathering, use this study to go deeper.

Open

December 3, 2017

The Christmas season is upon us! For most people, Andy Williams' song got it right. *It's the most wonderful time of the year!* What could possibly make us afraid during this otherwise magical season? Ask the question and you may receive a list of understandable explanations, like the pressure of gift giving, overspending and debt, overeating and gaining weight; painful holiday memories, family turmoil, or the lack of meaningful relationships altogether.

I know it seems unusual to begin our Christmas sermon series with fear, but maybe not. It is a big part of the original story. After all, the message of Christmas begins with the words, *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid!..."* (Luke 2.10a) You heard it. There is nothing to fear. After nearly 400 years of silence, a celestial choir tells Jewish shepherds in the middle of the night that the King of heaven is coming and they need not be afraid!

Main Point

Fear is all around us, and yet it has nothing to do with Jesus first coming. God says that fear is not His objective in sending His Son.

Read

Luke 2.8-20; Matthew 14.22-27

Discuss

- What things do people fear? What are underlying reasons for fear?
- Does fear motivate or inspire? Is it an effective influencer?
- Imagine the scene on the Bethlehem hillside. Is the shepherds' fear understandable? What in the scene would make you afraid?
- Were their fears soothed? Explain why/why not from the rest of the story.
- Compare and contrast the Matthew 14 story to the birth story in Luke 2. Jesus Himself says to not be afraid. Why not, do you think?
- If causing fear is not God's purpose in Jesus' first mission to earth, what is His purpose?