When was the last time you received good news? Maybe it was a good diagnosis at the doctor. Maybe it was a good test score or a school grade. Maybe it was a new baby in your world. One interesting thing about good news is that even though we may be skeptical of how true it is, often we want good news to be true, right? Even if it seems ‘too good to be true’, we often hope for good news to be true.
And so, why is it sometimes hard to understand what the angel said to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born: “…behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” (Luke 2.10, ESV) Many don’t see Jesus’ birth as particular good news. And part of that might be because we struggle with the truth of it, but I think there’s probably another reason, which I’ll come back to in a second. But the angel also says that this news will bring great joy. A joy that is overflowing. A joy that transcends happiness and contentment for all. That’s right: all. Everyone. All the people even. And that’s simply amazing, isn’t it? When was the last time something happened that made everyone happy, even joyful? As a parent, I have yet to make a decision that has made all five of my kids happy at the same time. As a pastor, I know I can’t please everyone. Even a good diagnosis, like being cancer free, can lead to others wondering why they didn’t receive the same prognosis. One person’s good news might lead to resentment for someone else.
But Jesus’ birth should be good news of great joy for all the people. And it is…but it isn’t. It is because it should be and can be. It isn’t because something got in the way. In fact, it’s probably more that someone got in the way.
And I don’t want to point fingers, so I’ll focus on myself. I know personally that I have been responsible for making this good news of great joy not so good or great for others. I have said and done things that doesn’t reveal this good news well. Even as a follower of Jesus, and a pastor, I know I can get in the way of this good news.
And so if I have been the reason for this good news to be less than good for you, I apologize. And if I could apologize for other Jesus followers who have given you the wrong message about Jesus, I’d apologize for them, too.
Because the real news of Jesus is good. It’s great even. And it should bring joy and life and hope. And it should bring that to you. I pray this Christmas, somehow, it does. God bless.