

## **The God Who Gives The Message**

Luke 2: 8-20

*“<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

*<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

*<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”*

*<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.*

*<sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”*

The birth of Christ, the Savior of the world, was not announced with grand fanfare to the influential and powerful society of the world, **it was given unto the lowly and simple people who needed a Savior**. God chose to share this great news with the humble, outcast, and insignificant shepherds out in their fields. They were the first to receive the incredible news of the birth of God’s Son, Jesus. This remarkable decision demonstrates God’s compassion for the marginalized, the forgotten, the often ignored, people of our world. It also reflects His desire to bring redemption and hope to everyone, regardless of their status, position or reputation.

As we are contemplating this remarkable event, it should truly challenge our ideas of value and importance. Many times, our sense of what is of real value is determined by what we see or hear in this world, not what our Lord tells us. Oh, we may know that He is at the core of who we are, but we often allow the world to define us, establishing what we think is of great value or worth. God’s ways are different from our ways, and we often have a difficult time comprehending that fact. As we read His Word, we find that He often exalts the humble as He lifts them up, utilizing them for His glory.

Like the shepherds, we need to embrace the deep truth that our God loves us, and may use the improbable, and sometimes undesirable, to accomplish His purpose in life. God can and often does, use one of us to do the very things the whole world needs.

And at the same time, He provides something we as individuals may desperately need. With that, He brings us hope, light and love into the places where we live right now.

Now, here are some facts about the Shepherds as we look at this story today.

- They were the first to be told; **while they were busy doing what they always do.**
- They saw and heard the angel of the Lord; **They were afraid at first. As I would bet all of would be.**
- They saw and heard the host of angels praising God. **Wouldn't that be powerful to hear?**
- They believed the angel of the Lord and went to see Jesus — with haste. **They didn't seem to doubt the message, they accepted it.**
- They were the first evangelists; **They saw Jesus long before the wise men. He was less than a-week-old in the manger.** What they had witnessed, they told others and that is evangelism.

That the shepherds who visited Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were **“living out in the fields”** suggests several things.

**First**, the shepherds must have had right to be in fields that otherwise would have been sown with grain. Likely they were shepherds connected to the village of Bethlehem, like David (**1 Sam 16:11; 17:15, 20; Ps 78:70–71**), rather than shepherds of the semi-nomadic variety (i.e., Bedouin). If that is so, then they likely would have known everyone in Bethlehem, and been familiar with the community. The kind of people everyone knew and loved.

**Second**, the shepherds must have been in the fields at a time when the fields were fallow— that is, after harvest and before plowing and planting. There is a symbiotic relationship here: sheep and goats (**flocks are nearly always mixed**) grazing on the stubble of the harvested wheat and barley fields, and in the process, fertilizing the field for the next cycle of plowing and planting. Keep in mind, that there was, tension between farmers and herdsmen, **back then as there has been through the years**, even though the harvest was over and the field were simply stubble. There would have been a thin covering of wild grass growing as long as the rains were sufficient.

One of the first occupations in the bible was a shepherd, held by Abel. (Gen 4: 1-8) So, this was something which was taking place for some time. In those days, working as a shepherd was a respectable career. The social status of the shepherd declined as Israel ceased living as nomads and started farming as a way to maintain life.

For a short period of time, As King David was raising to power, the status of being a Shepherd was raised due to his being one. Being considered as an acceptable career to follow. As in many cases, as some of the shepherd began to live in a lawless form, as when this took place, the view of their profession went down. Because of this, most people saw this lifestyle, those who chose the vocation of being a Shepherd, to be a “second class” citizen, untrustworthy, compared to other vocations. Jeremiah writes, that at this time the Shepherds were being deprived of all civil rights. Could not fulfil public offices, or, be a witness in a trial, and so on.

The only Shepherds who had any stature in society were those who were Shepherd Priest. They served at the edge of Bethlehem, as people came to offer sacrificial lambs for worship. On that night, when Jesus was born, He changed everything for them, and the world. They were no longer look down upon, as much, because the Messiah came to them first.

**God changed everything in that one night.** Just as He changes everything in our lives as he comes to us, and we accept Him as Lord, a new birth in Christ. It is interesting that God is called, **“a high priest,”** (Hebrews 5: 1-10) **“a shepherd,”** (Psalm 23:1) and a **“sacrificial lamb,”** (John 1:29) in scripture. Do we see the picture forming? Another interesting thought to consider is, Why we God’s people often call church leaders, **“Pastor’s”** or **“Shepherds?”** Could it be that a Pastor is someone such as these Shepherds?

God gives the Message, and it is for all of us, not just those who saw Him first over two thousand years ago.

So, let’s take a look and see how this applies to us today?

### **First ~ Who did the Lord come for?**

*“<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”*

This message was for **“all the people.”** That means, all of us sitting here today. Not just those who may have acted correctly, or those who lived in the right home or city, Jesus came for all of us. He first appeared to the Shepherds, the less than favorable people of that day, then the Angel told them, **“I am here with a message for everyone on earth.”**

So, let me ask, **“Did Jesus come for you?”** The answer: **YES!** **“Did He come for me?”** The answer again: **YES!** Then, why do so may feel like second class citizens when our Lord came to lift them up? To love them and change their lives. They should not, nor should anyone sitting here today, feel as they are not worthy of His love. We are not second class in His eyes.

### **Second ~ The Message brings visible signs and proclamation.**

*<sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

The Angel told those gathered, there was something magnificent happening in **“The town of David,”** a Savior is born. That is the same message we have been given today, right now.

Most of us have sung a song that reminds us that ***“People need the Lord,”*** yet, so many simply do not know where to find Him. He is here, now! Where can we find Him? Wherever we are.

One easy way to find Him and celebrate His presence in our lives, is when we look for and find reasons to be grateful. Stop looking at what has gone wrong, and start looking for what is going right. Search for things we can be thankful for throughout our day—even if they may seem small and silly. Maybe we snagged a great parking space at the store. Maybe we found the perfect birthday gift for a friend. Or perhaps it was something as simple as our favorite song playing on the radio this morning. Praise God.

God’s Word says to us, ***“In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.”*** Psalm 95:4–5 Nature has its own spirit, its own quiet sense of majesty. Take time to celebrate the beauty of God’s wonders which are right outside our doors. We will find Him, if we seek for Him.

Whether you explore the wildness of the mountains, or simply care for the houseplant on your windowsill, there’s grace to be found in every natural creation of God. I have often stood staring at the sky in amazement. Just look at the stars and the heavens.

Once we discover He is here with us, we simply can’t help but begin to praise Him for what he has given us and does for us. <sup>13</sup> *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,* <sup>14</sup> *“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”* His favor rests upon all who seek Him and know His grace. All of us, any of us. This message is for you and me. The Message of His birth brings visible signs and proclamation of praise unto Him. We can’t help but praise Him!

### ***Third ~ Go find Jesus and be amazed!***

<sup>15</sup> *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”* <sup>16</sup> *So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.* <sup>17</sup> *When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,* <sup>18</sup> *and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.* <sup>19</sup> *But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.* <sup>20</sup> *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”*

I don’t know who it is the Lord will use to bring this great news to our lives, but when it crosses our paths, we dare not ignore it, or turn away from it. We should accept it and embrace it. Find JESUS!

Once we find Him, go tell everyone we know, and those who may have invested in our lives, what we have found. You have become His child! You were just born, just as Jesus was in the manger years ago.

Once the Angel left, they ran, they didn't walk, they ran to tell everyone what had just taken place. <sup>17</sup> *When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,* <sup>18</sup> *and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.* It is our time, time to go find Jesus and be amazed at what He will do in us and through our lives as we submit to Him in every area of our lives. We will not be able to stop talking about it.

I like what it says about Mary and the Shepherds after that last statement, "<sup>19</sup> ***But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*** <sup>20</sup> *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*"

- Mary sat and pondered on what had just happened.
- The Shepherds, they ran to tell everyone. I can just see them singing and praising the Lord, as they went about their way, because their lives had been dramatically changed.

Can you hear them? ***"Do you know what I just witnessed and what happened?"*** That should be the heart of everyone who finds Jesus for the first time in life, or, truly re-dedicating their lives to a living Savior.

### ***The God Who Gives the Message***

This story is all about who He is.

Do you know Him?

Closing Prayer...