

Christmas Eve Communion: Lessons in Seeking Christ From the Humble Shepherds Luke 2:1-20

The Shepherds are so much like us. They heard and responded to God, and came to Christ.

From their lives tonight, join me in seeing the way those who greeted Christ at His arrival, have shown us the way to worship Him.

The Shepherds are the Model

Heading into Christmas Eve, I have been meditating on the Shepherds as my model for seeing Christ clearly this Christmas season. The Shepherds were distinctly examples of: Humble People.

When God gets to tell the story of salvation, the Coming of the King, the birth of the Lamb of God—what details does He carefully include for us?

Here's one that has shaped my whole outlook on life, on worship, on Bible study, and most of all—on prayer. God really loves and responds to humility.

Who came first to the birthplace of the King? The humblest, lowliest, and most unworthy in man's eyes of all the inhabitants living around Bethlehem—the shepherds.

Join me tonight in a stable with men of the least likely profession to see a King—and yet the most honored of all Christ's greeters and seekers. Open to Luke 2:8-20 where we will see tonight that:

God Opens the Door to the Humble

Humble shepherds who found Baby Jesus in a stable remind us that the Inn of Bethlehem was full.

That there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus.

The only place where there was room for Him was on a cross. He sought an entry to the

over-crowded hearts of men; He could not find it; and still His search-and His rejection-go on.

Yet Luke gets us to look from the inn with no room, to the shepherds with room in their lives for Christ's coming. They made room.

First century shepherds lived in a world that made it hard, to make a living. They struggled and scraped along at minimum wages. In fact someone describes the 1st Century this way—

“Taxes were high; wages were low, hypocrisy was rampant; honesty was rare. Freedom was gone; Roman occupation was hard. The rich were getting richer; the poor were always struggling. Morality was ebbing; rebellion was brewing; cruelty was reigning.”¹

The Shepherds of the Christmas story gives us such a profound lesson. They show us how God delights in using for His glory the humble. God calls some of the most distant, defiled and outcast of all--and through them produces great glory for Himself.

What God Saw in the Humble Shepherds

Look at the characteristics of these incredible humble shepherds of Christmas:

- **The Humble are Un-Distracted:**the Shepherds listened to God. Remember that God reveals Himself to those who seek Him with ALL their hearts.
- **The Humble are Un-Delayed:**the Shepherds come at once to God. Remember that because they heard and responded, they were first to see Jesus.
- **The Humble are Un-Ashamed:**the Shepherds come like they are to God. Remember how they come in wonder, in fear, in uncertainty, in hope.
- **The Humble are Un-Daunted:**the Shepherds come no matter what stands in the way of God. Remember that they had enough excuses that they could have never made it. What would we wear? Who would watch the sheep? What if we can't find Him? What if they won't let us in?
- **The Humble are Un-Swerved:**the Shepherds go against the tide of culture and the crowd, to get to God. Remember that they were un-welcomed in public. They

¹ Author unknown.

smelled.

Have you decided to be among those humbly seeing Jesus this Christmas time?

These shepherds represent the best of all God's Word about the rewards that come to those who seek and find the Lord.

Look Again at God's Birth Announcement

Now that we know what we will be looking at, let's go back to the only first hand, eye witness account, of the greatest event in all of human history. Luke captures the exact moment of the invasion of earth by God in disguise. Look again at Luke 2:1-20 as we read with our minds and see with our hearts these humble shepherds.

*Luke 2:8-20 (NKJV) Now there were in the same country shepherds (**their work kept them from the Temple and synagogue; they also were made ceremonially unclean by their work; thus they were outcasts**) living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

*v. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them (**probably Gabriel who does all of the other announcements about Christ's Birth—signaling the first time in centuries that God's Glory was seen on earth.**), and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid (**this words speaks of an intensely great fear**).*

*v. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host (**this word is used for a military encampment; Revelation 5:11 uses it to constitute a number that humans can't comprehend**) praising God and saying:*

*v. 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (**In Jewish homes the neighbors usually gathered to sing at the birth of a son—since no one knew of Christ's Birth, God sent His own group of innumerable friends to greet Jesus, the Son of God, at His Birth!**)*

*v. 15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they came with haste and found (**this word speaks of searching; they found Him only after a careful search was made**) Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.*

v. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told

them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled (**thaumadzo in Greek is used 12 times in Luke and is a chosen theme of this Gospel. God is awesome and wonderfully amazing.**) at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Consider Four Lessons from the Shepherds

1. **God captivated them.** That announcement under the stars, in the hillsides of Bethlehem, left one band of shepherds forever changed. That awesome, fearful moment, they would never forget. The glorious words of that first angel would always echo in their hearts. That blazing light was captured forever in their minds--the light of Heaven and the praises of those angelic multitudes. Luke records that they rushed from the glowing skies over the fields and searched until they found Him.

I wonder this Christmas—has God ever captivated you?

2. **God changed them.** That scene they witnessed in the stable would forever change their lives. For, they had found Him and they were never the same. What had happened was that in a moment everything they had ever heard about the Scriptures came alive. God, angels, Heaven, Messiah, promises and prophecies in that moment became real. Finally, it all made sense.

I wonder this Christmas—has God ever changed you?

3. **God became near to them.** Those endless sacrifices, countless lambs, myriads of offerings, countless sins, and promises of forgiveness--became intensely personal. The ordinary sheep they watched and sold became the extraordinary pictures of God's mercy and grace. The Temple they supplied now became the place where sacrifices for their sins were offered. At last all those mysteries rites and ceremonies made sense, for they had found the Promised Lamb of God.

I wonder this Christmas—has God ever become personal, real, and near to you?

4. **God started them down a new path.** Up until that night of nights, their lives as shepherds had been monotonous and predictable. They were used to sheep which vary little in their habits, they walk so often down the same path it is soon a rutted canyon.

I wonder this Christmas—has God started you down a new path, His pathway for your life?

Does God See in Me, What He Saw in the Humble Shepherds?

Look at the characteristics of these incredible humble shepherds of Christmas:

- **The Humble are Un-Distracted:** the Shepherds listened to God. Remember that God reveals Himself to those who seek Him with ALL their hearts.

Will you ask God to change your heart into a humble un-distracted heart for Him?

- **The Humble are Un-Delayed:** the Shepherds come at once to God. Remember that because they heard and responded, they were first to see Jesus.

Will you ask God to change your heart into a humble un-delayed heart for Him?

- **The Humble are Un-Ashamed:** the Shepherds come like they are to God. Remember how they come in wonder, in fear, in uncertainty, in hope.

Will you ask God to change your heart into a humble un-ashamed heart for Him?

- **The Humble are Un-Daunted:** the Shepherds come no matter what stands in the way of God. Remember that they had enough excuses that they could have never made it. What would we wear? Who would watch the sheep? What if we can't find Him? What if they won't let us in?

Will you ask God to change your heart into a humble un-daunted heart for Him?

- **The Humble are Un-Swerved:** the Shepherds go against the tide of culture and the crowd, to get to God. Remember that they were un-welcomed in public. They smelled.

Will you ask God to change your heart into a humble un-swerved heart for Him?

The Shepherds of the Christmas story gives us such a profound lesson. They show us how God delights in using for His glory the humble. God calls some of the most distant, defiled and outcast of all--and through them produces great glory for Himself.