

“The Announcement to the Shepherds”

Luke 2:8-14

INTRO:

I think one of the most memorable scenes in the Christmas Special, *“A Charlie Brown Christmas,”* is when Charlie Brown says, *“Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”* Linus then dramatically recites our text for this message. When he finishes he says, *“That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”* Linus was right. This is what Christmas is all about. It is not about a dead tree or eating candy out of our socks. Nor is it about tinsel, presents, or family get togethers, although these things are important. Christmas is about the fact that at a special point in history, God entered into the realm of His creation and became a baby born in Bethlehem.

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 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. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.’”

As we explore this announcement together, our study will have two parts.

I. To Whom the Announcement Came (v. 8-9)

II. The One Announced (v. 10-11)

I. To Whom the Announcement Came (v. 8-9)

A. When we think about the birth of Jesus Christ, we cannot help but be awed at what is taking place here.

1. As John wrote in his nativity account in **John 1:14**,
“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Here is the eternal logos, who was with God and was God, takes on Himself human flesh and begins His earth walk!

2. The Apostle Paul also tried to put the wonder of this event in human language when he wrote:

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no

reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:5-8)

This baby boy who is born this night in Bethlehem is no normal baby boy. He is Immanuel, God with us.

B. So, we learn that this Jesus is a significant person, indeed the most significant person ever born. Surely then, there must be an announcement of His birth. But to whom will this press release be addressed?

1. Let's see, a prophet should be dispatched to Caesar's palace in Rome. No. Okay, then a delegation of angels should appear to Herod, the Great, King in Judea. Wrong again. Maybe there should be a mass announcement, a whole choir of angels to proclaim the news in Jerusalem, the city where God has set His name? Wrong again.

2. To whom does God in His wisdom announce the most important birth in the history of humankind? He announces it to shepherds. **(Luke 2:8)**

“Now there were in the same country, shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night.”

C. Why did He choose to announce the birth of the Messiah/King to shepherds? We know the shepherds were not very high up on the food chain. In fact, shepherds, because of their isolation, could not regularly take part in the religious ordinances of Israel and because their lifestyle made strict legal observance difficult, they were thought to be unclean and unacceptable to God. The Rabbis, who were the powers that be, declared them unclean. To the rejected of men, the Father made the single most important proclamation in history. He announced the birth of His Son!

1. There are several reasons why the Lord might have chosen the shepherds to be the only ones to see and hear this tremendous announcement of the Messiah's birth. First, it may have been because the Jewish people had always been shepherds down through the history of the nation. When Joseph brought the children of Israel into Egypt, they were given the land of Goshen because the Egyptians could not stand shepherds. Perhaps, by announcing this to the shepherds God was saying that here is the one who came to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

2. Second, the announcement was made to shepherds because of our lord's connection to King David. David was a shepherd and became a King. The babe born at Bethlehem was the greater son of David. He was the great shepherd who would lay down His life for the sheep.

3. Third, the announcement might have been made to shepherds because they were caring for the sheep who would become pascal lambs, sacrifices to God to remind Israel of her redemption from Egypt. He who was born this day in the city of David, would die as ***“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”***

4. Fourth, it may be that the announcement went to the shepherds to show that Jesus did not come to just save kings and the upper echelon of the world. He also came to save all humankind, even the bottom of the list, the shepherd. Listen to the reminder that Paul wrote to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 1:26-29**.

“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

II. The One Announced (v. 10-11)

A. ***“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.’”*** (v.11-14)

Although the Lord made His announcement to lowly shepherds, it did not lack any aspect of a divine announcement. There was the Shekinah glory. There was an angel of the Lord as the spokesperson. An angel chorus underlined the majesty of this message. God did not skimp on the press release for the birth of His Son!

B. The announcement is built around three titles. The first is the title ***“Christ.”*** Because this title is so familiar to us, we may not understand the significance of this title to the shepherds and those to whom they gave this message. This one born in Bethlehem was none other than the Messiah, the anointed one whom they had waited for centuries.

C. He is not just the Christ. He is ***“Christ the Lord.”*** This is a significant statement because it underlines that He is not just man, but the God/man. *Kurios* is the word the Septuagint (LXX) used to translate the name *Yahweh*. He is the Yahweh of the Old Testament come in human flesh.

D. The greatest news of all was the first of the titles that they heard, ***“a Savior.”*** This is why He came. He came to save us from our sin. My single favorite Christmas verse is found in **Matthew 1:21**;

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Do you know this Savior who was born in Bethlehem? Until you do, you will not understand why this announcement was ***“good tidings of great joy!”***