

WHAT HAVE YOU SEEN AND HEARD?: Luke 2:20.

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Luke 2:1-20.

1. What did the shepherds see and hear?

The things that the shepherds saw and heard could not be missed. They were actually present when these things took place and reported them to other people. What they saw and heard made them glorify and praise God. We were not able to be there ourselves so we rely on the account of people who were there. The Lord hand-picked them to be witnesses, passing over the wealthy and powerful leaders in Jerusalem, and chose to reveal His plans to humble people instead.

The shepherds saw, first of all, angels. With the angels, there was the glory of the Lord shining all around. It must have been awesome to behold. Then they heard the message about a Saviour who was to be born. They learnt that this was good news for all of mankind for this child that had been born was Christ the Lord. This was all extraordinary news. But they would have been surprised to learn that they would find the baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths, which was just the ordinary way that mothers would care for their newborn babies. While that part was so surprisingly ordinary, the fact that the baby would be in a manger was very extraordinary. And that is exactly what the shepherds found when they came to Bethlehem. The one who held the fate of mankind in His hands, was lying, a fragile little baby, in a manger. They would have marveled and so did everyone that they told this to (Luke 2:18). It was an un-missable event that had to be told to everyone. So the shepherds reported what they had seen and heard.

2. What do we see and hear?

There is a message to be further reported to others in our own day. Unfortunately, a lot of people would like to censor or, at least, seriously water down the message of what had been seen and heard by the shepherds.

Some people tell us that it was a fairy tale and that nothing really happened at all. It is just a bright and magical story, a little bit of make-believe for children. Others see it as something more serious, like a deadly virus, putting the dangerous and wrong idea of the supernatural out into the wider world. They would say that these are dangerous ideas doing harm to impressionable minds. Others would say that we have an accurate report of what the shepherds saw and heard but that we have got the message wrong.

Perhaps, they would say, the Lord Jesus is just a man really. He is a Saviour but perhaps, some would suggest, He has come to save us from selfishness or materialism. Or that He has come to bring us joy and comfort but, in some vague sense, to cheer us up in this sad world and give us something positive to think about.

So what do we see and hear when we are told what the shepherds reported? Do we believe that they got it right when they told other people the things that they had seen and heard? Or were they mistaken?

3. What you need to see and hear.

We do need to get away from these ideas that the shepherds were mistaken and take on board wholesale what they saw and heard. This means that we are to believe in the angels, the star, the manger, everything. For the message of the angels and the message of the manger is all part of the message of the Bible. Everything in the Bible, including the account of the first Christmas, tells us that this Child is our only hope. There is no one else that will be able to bring us the forgiveness of God, eternal life and an experience of the love of God in the soul.

We need to believe in the reality of the salvation that is promised to us through this Child. We all need saving from our sin. We cannot point away from ourselves and say that other people need saving but that we are comparatively faultless and blameless. We, each of us, need saving as much as anyone else. We need someone to pay our debts and to make us fit for heaven. We need someone to be able to cleanse us, annul the penalty of our sin and renew us.

In all of this, we need to hear ourselves saying 'Sorry' to God and admitting that we deserve His wrath for our wrongdoing. We accept our sin and declare that the verdict the Lord brings against us is just and right. We agree that we dare not contest His decision but have to accept His ruling against us in its entirety.

Beyond this, we need to hear ourselves saying that we want the Lord to receive us to Himself, to make us His children, to bring the wonderful benefits of His Son's death to count for us, to cover our sin, and to make us holy in God's sight. We ask that the Lord would receive His Son's death as though it was ours, and account His Son's perfect life, as though it was ours. By believing in the report of what the shepherds saw and heard, we are able to go to heaven one day.