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The King's Seekers the Shepherds



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How about it? Are you looking for Jesus this Christmas? Or is this Christmas flying by so fast you will miss what God is offering you? Everyone who was looking for Jesus to come enjoyed His arrival. As we examine their lives we can often see ourselves. Who are you like?

- First we saw Herod. Are you like Him? He lived for himself and would sacrifice nothing of his power, pleasures, or possessions for Jesus the King.
- Second we saw the Wisemen. They were an example of faith and sacrifice. They sought out Jesus at any cost. The Magi were willing to follow God's way anywhere in order to find their Promised King and Savior.

Let's trace their pathway tonight upon our hearts as a lesson. If you want to seek and find Him here is a pattern that God has recorded for us to learn from.

- **Come to Him Yourself:** Do you see the lesson in the way these Wisemen gave? They didn't send their gifts by another's hand, they came and brought them personally to Jesus. God wants you, in person, to come to Him. Undaunted by the long and arduous journey, they must have been amazed to find a mere baby in a stable. After the magnificence of King Herod's palace and his overpowering presence it is amazing that they fell down in worship before baby Jesus **as they did**. **Choosing to disobey Herod's demand that they reveal the location of Jesus indicates their faith.** This choice could have **cost them their lives**. So in every way it was a personal coming to Jesus that marked their lives.
 - **Have you come personally to Jesus in prayer, worship, and adoration today? Have you given yourself to Jesus this Christmas? That is the first gift. Remember how Paul commended the saints that "first gave themselves" (II Corinthians 8:5)?**
- **Sacrifice your time, freedom, and comfort for Him** : From the two year calculation of Herod's death warrant on the babies of the region we can infer that it took many months for these Wisemen to travel to Jerusalem. Herod added some months on each end to cover any potential birth near that time. All that to say that it was hard to travel 1100 to 1200 miles back then. They walked and rode across hot and arid deserts, through rivers, and across cold and dangerous mountain passes to get to Christ's birthplace from the regions of Babylon, Persia or Media. Even today this journey is very difficult and dangerous.
 - **What are you sacrificing giving to Jesus this Christmas that costs you something?**

Hymn #127 is a prayer for making room for Christ in His special season. Listen to these precious words.

Thou didst leave Thy throne

And Thy kingly crown

When Thou camest to earth for me;

But in Bethlehem's home

Was there found no room

For Thy holy nativity:

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,

Us	There is room in my heart for Thee.
Part: 29 Joseph & Mary: The King's servants	2 Heaven's arches rang
Part: 28 Lessons from the Wise Men Giving our Worship to Jesus	When the angels sang,
Part: 27 Simeon & Anna-- Single Hearted Devotion	Proclaiming Thy royal degree;
Part: 26 The Humble Shepherds	But of lowly birth
Part: 25 Priests--Indifferent People	Didst Thou come to earth,
Part: 25 The Characters of Christmas	And in greatest humility:
Part: 24 Christmas Traditions: Their origins and meanings	O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
Part: 24 Ordinary People: Zechariah & Elisabeth	There is room in my heart for Thee.
Part: 23 The King's Glory	3 The foxes found rest,
Part: 22 Joseph & Mary-- Does God have all of YOU?	And the birds their nest
Part: 21 So close and yet so far Zacharias, Elisabeth, Chief Priests and Scribes	In the shade of the forest tree;
Part: 20 The King's Seekers the Shepherds	But Thy couch was the sod,
Part: 19 The King's Seekers Magi and Shepherds	O Thou Son of God,
Part: 18 The Wonder of Christ's Love	In the deserts of Galilee:
Part: 17 The King of Christmas and Herod	O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
Part: 16 What is Christmas	There is room in my heart for Thee.
Part: 15 Simeon & Anna Finishing Fruitfully	4 Thou camest, O Lord,
Part: 14 The Shepherds	With the living word
Part: 13 The Magi	That should set Thy people free;
Part: 12 Joseph & Mary Walking with the Lord	But with mocking scorn,
Part: 11 Zacharias and Elisabeth -- The 1st Spirit Filled Family	And with crown of thorn,
Part: 9 The Priests & Scribes: So close and yet so far	They bore Thee to Calvary:
Part: 8 The Two Kings: Herod and Jesus	O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
Part: 7 Joseph and the Magi	There is room in my heart for Thee.
Part: 6 The Origin of Christmas Traditions	5 When the heavens shall ring,
Part: 5 Are you looking for Christ this Christmas?	And the angels sing,
Part: 4 The Fourth Glory of Christmas: His Name	At Thy coming to victory,
Part: 3 God With Us	Let Thy voice call me home,
Part: 3 Lessons in Worshiping Christ	Saying, "Yet there is room,
Part: 2 Anna: Living a Life of Praise	There is room at My side for thee: "
Part: 2 God In A Manger	My heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus,
Part: 1 The Fullness of Time: The Day Jesus Was Born	When Thou comest and callest for me.

- **Present what you have to Him** : The Wisemen brought prophetic gifts that pictured what Christ's earthly work was all about. They brought what they had in their lives as wealthy rulers. And that is what God wanted, that is why He chose them. When God chose you it was not to bring their gifts but yours. Remember how the Lord accents the gifts of each individual. None are the same: all are precious to Him. Think through the people and gifts that God uses in His Word. Remember the little boy's lunch that fed thousands? How about an anonymous person's upper room that witnessed the Last Supper, the appearances of the Risen Christ, and the prayer meeting of Pentecost? Then there was the borrowing of an unbroken colt to carry the King of Kings as He rode to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. And who can ever forget the un-requested flask of perfume broken and spilled out just for love of Jesus.

- **Present what you have to Him this morning. Give Him your mind—let Him fill it. Give Him your hands—let Him guide and use them. Give Him your future—let Him plan and direct your life. Give Him your treasures—He can store them and invest them in safe places that bring everlasting rewards.**

- **Personally Worship Him** : But more than the coming and giving there is the greatest moment of all--they came, they bowed, they opened their treasures and presented them to Him...but before all of that—they fell down and worshipped Him! Worship is a rare and easily lost atmosphere of devotion, adoration, sacrifice, and communion.

Those Wisemen were overwhelmed at the sight of the One they came so far to see; the One they had waited so long to honor; the One they had paid so much to sacrifice their gifts upon—and when at last they saw Him they fell down and worshipped Him.

- o **This Christmas why don't you consider William Temple's definition of worship. And while you are off the busy highway of life--measure your personal worship temperature. Here is what he said:**
 - "[Worship is] to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God,
 - "[Worship is] to feed the mind with the truth of God,
 - "[Worship is] to purge the imagination by the beauty of God,
 - "[Worship is] to open up the heart to the love of God,
 - "[Worship is] to devote the will to the purpose of God."

Tonight as we continue to look at Christmas and the seekers of the King, we go to those who came first to the birthplace of the King. They were the humblest, lowliest, and most unworthy in man's eyes—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.

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."

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

Before we read the story, here is what I want you to see from Luke's inspired words. Here are the characteristics of these incredible shepherds of Christmas:

- **The Shepherds Listen to God:** remember that God reveals Himself to seekers.
- **The Shepherds Come at once to God:** remember that because they heard and responded and were first to see Jesus.
- **The Shepherds Come like they are to God:** remember how they come in wonder, in fear, in uncertainty, in hope.
- **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?
- **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.

Open with me to [Luke 2:1-20](#) as we read with our minds and see with our hearts the seekers of the King part two: shepherds.

[Luke 2:1-20](#) And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the place should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 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. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them (probably Gabriel who does all of the other announcements about Christ's Birth—signalling 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). 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: 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!) 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. 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.

Life for a shepherd in Century One was difficult at best. "Cold nights, long days, distant family, and rare friends were part of the territory. Sheep stink and shepherds smell.

Sheep wander and shepherds search. Life was never restful; work was never done.

At the low end of Jewish society stood the shepherd. Away from the synagogue, absent from the Temple, and defiled by dead animals – they were outcasts to the Jerusalem crowd. Unable to even be a witness to special events they seemed almost outside of culture. But then everything changed.

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.

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.

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

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.

Sheep are helpless – they can't even clean themselves.

Sheep are dumb – they can't even find food unless they are led to it.

Sheep are dirty – they walk around and collect any and all filth they come into contact with.

Sheep are helpless, dumb, and dirty – and can only be cared for by the patient.

So a group of patient men, who sat on the same hills their grandfathers had sat upon were watching the stars and talking that night – and then God came down.

The Shepherds remind us how God comes to mankind. God is the seeker. God is the initiator. And the shepherds were there, willing to listen and act. God can save the most distant, defiled and outcast.

- **The Shepherds Listened to God when He speaks.** What a wonderful but fearful sight they saw. Yet they did not ignore what they witnessed: they did not run away from what they saw: they did not refuse to hear what the angels said.
- **The Shepherds Came to God like they were.** Instead of backing away with the excuse of lack of education, lack of clothing, lack of standing – they welcomed God's message in wonder, in fear, in uncertainty, and in hope. There was no time to become someone else, God called them as they were!
- **The Shepherds Responded to God at once.** What a picture of faith – they received the message and acted upon it. They didn't doubt, they didn't disagree, they didn't question, they didn't hesitate. They just heard and responded -- and they were first to see Jesus. They had little knowledge and great faith. Jesus would be moved by His parents soon, and they would have missed Him. Their simple faith is richly rewarded. The journey that began in faith will end in joy!
- **The Shepherds Sought Baby Jesus until they found Him.** Luke uses terms to help us realize that they had to search for Him until they could find Him – and they did. They took what God had given them, no more and no less and that was all they needed to find Jesus – and they found Him. They searched for Him without giving up.
- **The Shepherds Went against the tide/crowd.** In their day and time they were not welcome. Stay where you came from, go away, we don't like you -- they were outcasts: they were unwelcome in public. They smelled. Yet they came, they found, they believed, and they went away telling everyone they could!
- **The Shepherds Told everyone they could the Good News.** Just like the rest of the New Testament would record – these shepherds went back to their old jobs – AS NEW MEN. If anyone is in Christ Jesus they are a new creation, old things are passing away, and all things are becoming new.

Now this Christmas time, will you be a shepherd? Shepherds represent the best of all God's Word about the rewards that come to those who seek and find the Lord. Will you experience the glad tidings of the Gospel? Will you experience great joy? You can if you chose be like them and:

- **Decide to Listen to God when He speaks.** Like the shepherds tune your heart to listen and look for God while you are at work, at school, or at home. Remember that

the eyes of the Lord are looking down for someone that is looking up and seeking God.

- **Decide to Come to God like you are.** Just as I am—God will receive. Ask Him to change you, melt you, mould you, fill you, and use you. O Lamb of God I come just as I am, for you to fix. There is no time to become someone else, God called us as we are!
- **Decide to Respond to God at once.** Just as they would have missed that moment if they had waited so the Lord tells us—while you hear His voice don't wait. Early will I seek You. First will I seek You. With my whole heart will I seek You.
- **Decide to Seek Jesus until you find Him.** Like Peter, Andrew, James, and John—drop your nets and follow Him. Like Peter say I have left all behind to follow You. Like Paul say I count everything else as trash—so I can have you. Like David say—one thing have I desired above all others and that is YOU, O Lord.
- **Decide to Go against the tide of the world and against the crowd going their own way.** Jesus tells us all that the gate is narrow, the road is hard. We must press into His Kingdom. We must draw near to Him. We can't serve two masters, only One. As Moses cried, we need to choose this day who we will serve. And later Joshua said it clearly, "As for me and my house—we will serve the Lord!" Finally as Paul confessed, life is Christ, death is only better because I am with Him.
- **Decide to Tell everyone the Good News.** As those at Christ's resurrection and at Pentecost—they couldn't stop telling the great news. They went everywhere and told everyone what He had done in their lives. So we in His power can do so in our generation.

Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Luke (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

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