

Message #10**Luke 2:8-20**

I will never forget the time I got lost in the Rocky Mountains. We were hunting about eight miles deep in the mountains and I was to meet Jim back at the horses about dark to ride out. But I got into another mountain range and it got too dark to find my way out. So I figured I needed to find a spot to build a shelter and fire and hunker down for the night. I had fired three bullets as a distress signal and Jim could not hear them, at least that's what he said. I felt alone, somewhat intimidated and even a little afraid. We were in the heart of grizzly country. I spotted a good place to hunker down on the side of a mountain and all of a sudden two guys rode up to me on horses. I told them I was lost and they said well why don't you come to our camp and we will figure this out. So I did. The two guys said we never ride in this far, but we decided to today and we are glad we did. As I lay in their camp, I thought, God is still looking out for me, when I am in this wilderness.

Joseph and Mary were about to learn that as they were staying in an animal shed. When Jesus Christ was born, there were no special lights they could see, no special fanfares or heavenly announcements they could hear. They had not heard anything directly from God for months.

They had been forced to go to Bethlehem for Roman registration and taxation purposes. That trip was an added expense that Joseph and Mary did not need. When they got to Bethlehem, there was no place for them to stay so they wound up staying in some barn-like structure used for animals. They must have felt confused, alone, abandoned and somewhat afraid. They could probably look from where they were and see the nice places other people were staying.

God decided to send them very unusual encouragement. He decided to send them some shepherds from the side of the mountains. Now most would naturally think the thing to do would be to send them a visit from the High Priest, or a visit from the Emperor of Rome, or the visit of some very important Rabbi, Pharisee or Scribe. But God says to encourage Joseph and Mary, I will send them shepherds. They will reveal to them that I am watching over this and I am caring for them.

WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN, GOD USED SOME VERY UNLIKELY PEOPLE TO ENCOURAGE JOSEPH AND MARY TO SHOW THEM THAT HE WAS CARING FOR THEM.

When you find yourself in unexplainable, depressing circumstances and you know you are doing the will of God, God will show you He is there with you, but it probably won't be the way you think. He will use some very unlikely people to minister to you.

As we look at this text, there are two main historical facts that Luke carefully documented:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – God first revealed news about the birth of Christ to shepherds.

2:8-14

In Greek, the phrase “in the same region” is really stressed by Luke in his use of articles. Actually the text says, “in THE region, THE same region.” Luke may have actually gone to this area and perhaps actually talked with the shepherds about this event.

Shepherds were somewhat of a despised class of people. Religious leaders considered them to be scum:

- 1) They were not allowed to be a witness at anything, because Jews said their word was no good.
- 2) No one was supposed to help a shepherd because they were considered to be a low life.
- 3) They were declared to be ceremonially unclean by religious leaders because their occupation prevented them from following all of the man-made Pharisaical codes and traditions.

J. Dwight Pentecost said, “These were the most unlikely recipients of such a revelation, for shepherds were despised as a class because they were unable to observe the customary laws of ceremonial purification. They were considered unclean. They had not been schooled in the law and therefore were considered ignorant” (*The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p. 60).

According to **verse 8**, they were caring for their sheep in “the same region.” What that means is they were somewhere near Bethlehem; somewhere in the vicinity. They were out in the hills that surround the area. There is a spot in the area called the “Shepherds Field” which is located about two miles from Bethlehem, which may be where they were. It was night time and they were out watching and guarding their sheep. During the night, there are predator animals and thieves, so the shepherds were watching their flock.

Now this is interesting because God chooses to reveal the most amazing revelation to working men. These are not religious guys or monks who are meditating in a monastery; these are working shepherds who are watching and guarding their flocks in a field. These were not men studying books; these are shepherds doing their job.

This would be the equivalent to God revealing His great prophetic plan to men working the all night shift in a factory. He was not revealing it to ministers or scholars, but to working men who were working the 11-7 shift.

Don't be surprised if you see that some of the greatest encouraging people God sends into your world are not the professional clergy. Some of the best people in your life may turn out to be a farmer, a janitor, a builder, a mechanic, a truck driver, a factory worker or a barber. Some of the greatest encouragers you will ever meet probably will not be professional ministers, but a widow or a housewife or a child. For Joseph and Mary, it was the shepherds.

According to **verse 9**, an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. This glory would have been a bright shining glory that would have signaled the “majestic presence of God.”

Now one reason why I think Luke interviewed some of these shepherds is because he reveals their emotions, “they were terribly frightened.” The Greek says, “they became afraid; a great fear.”

Verses 10 says that the angel commanded them to stop being afraid. Then the angel gives them three reasons why they must stop being afraid:

Reason #1 - Because the angel is bringing them good news. **2:10a**

The word “good news” (εὐαγγελίζομαι) is the Greek word that indicates the good news of Gospel proclamation. This is the good news of the Savior’s presence on earth. Now if some angel shows up and stands before you and does not say I am bringing you good news, you have plenty of reason to be greatly afraid. Angels are used in carrying out severe judgments. But this angel is bringing these shepherds not only good news, but great news and amazing news. This angel is bringing to the world saving news.

Reason #2 - Because the good news is news that will bring great joy. **2:10b**

This good news will bring great joy to sinners who want sins forgiven. The good news concerning Jesus Christ will only bring great joy to those interested in being right with God. If one is not interested in being right with God, this news does not bring great joy, but great warning.

Reason #3 - Because the good news will be news of great joy for “all the people.” **2:10c**

Notice the article “the” before the noun people. First and foremost, this is great news for Israel. But also this is great news for all people of the world who want to be saved from their sins and have a peaceful relationship with the true God of the Bible. One has been born who can give this. But to the one who does not believe in Jesus Christ, this is condemnatory news for all the people.

Now the specific good news that the angel brought to these shepherds contains two messages, introduced in **verse 11** by the conjunction “for” (οτι):

(Message #1) - Your Savior has been born today in David’s city. 2:11a

The angel stresses that this is the shepherd’s Savior and He was born for them in David’s city which is Bethlehem. This is great news for these shepherds who were told they could not be right with God. This angel says this is “your Savior.” The pronoun “you” specifically targets these shepherds. This baby is their Savior and this baby is our Savior.

(Message #2) - Your Savior is the Messiah and the Lord. 2:11b

The angel specifically identifies this Savior as being the Jewish Messiah and God. This baby is the Messiah of Israel and the Lord of Glory. It is rare to have one verse that presents all these titles. **Jesus Christ is the Savior. Jesus Christ is the Messiah (Christ) and Jesus Christ is the Lord.** The Apostle Paul identified Jesus as the God, Savior, Messiah, in Titus 2:13.

This is the only One who can save Israel as a nation and the only one who can save a sinner from damnation.

Now before the shepherds could respond, according to **verse 12**, the angel said there is a specific sign that will show you exactly who this baby is.

If the religious world were writing the script, the sign would probably be something like this: You will find this baby in a golden throne crib wearing a beautiful purple robe and a jeweled crown. You will find masses of people going into his well-furnished nursery and bowing down.

But those were not the signs God chose to give to the shepherds. There were two identification signs:

Identification Sign #1 - You will find the baby wrapped like every other Jewish Baby. 2:12a

This God/baby, Messiah, Savior will be wrapped in strips of cloth like the average Jewish baby. That would be normal. You would normally find a baby looking like this. He will not be wearing a crown of royalty, or a robe of purple.

Identification Sign #2 - You will find the baby lying in a manger. 2:12b

This next sign is what you would never expect concerning the God/Savior/Messiah/King. Now the first sign is normal, but this sign is bizarre. You do not expect to find any newborn baby in a smelly animal barn, lying in a feeding trough. If this were the case today, the health and welfare department would take the baby away from these parents.

But this is not just any baby. This is the God/Savior/Messiah/King baby and this is where you will find Him and this is how you will find Him. You would expect to find Him in a palace, not there.

Even before the shepherds could mentally get a handle on this, according to **verse 13**, suddenly there appeared with this angel a multitude of angels praising God. There were two parts to this praise:

***Praise Part #1* - The birth of this baby brings glory to God in the highest. 2:14a**

What this means is that these angels are praising God for the birth of this baby. They are praising God, who is the highest God who lives in the highest and holiest place.

Praise Part #2 - The birth of this baby would bring a peace relationship to men on earth whom He favors. **2:14b**

The birth of this baby brings glory to God because this baby will bring grace to sinners who have been favored by God and will bring them into a peace relationship with God. These angels are praising God for the doctrine of election.

This is amazing theological truth and this truth is being revealed to shepherds who are out in some field outside of Bethlehem.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – The shepherds respond to the news the angel revealed. **2:15-20**

These shepherds were working the all night shift and when this happened, it set off a “chain reaction.” There are four responses of the shepherds:

Response #1 - The shepherds immediately want to go see this baby. **2:15**

They want to immediately go to Bethlehem to see this that they knew the Lord had revealed to them. For the first time in their lives, they felt they were important to God. What I find interesting is that the angel said the baby was in the city of David and the Shepherds knew that was Bethlehem, so they were not as Biblically illiterate as the Pharisees were suggesting.

Response #2 - The shepherds quickly went and found Mary and Joseph and the Baby. **2:16**

These shepherds “hurried” to respond to this. People God greatly uses are quick to respond to the Word of God. Notice that Mary is mentioned first, then Joseph, and then the baby. So we may assume that Mary was nearest the door, Joseph was closest to the trough and Jesus was lying in the manger.

Response #3 - The shepherds testified of all they had been told about the baby. **2:17-19**

These shepherds are the first N.T. evangelists who are witnessing the truth about Jesus Christ. He is the Savior, the Messiah and God.

According to **verse 18**, they apparently told everyone they met. Their testimony baffled the majority of people. In fact, that word “wondered” means the people who heard their story stood in total amazement. They were doing a lot of thinking and not much talking.

Verse 19 is critical. The shepherds had a very much needed effect on Mary. She considered what these shepherds said to be a treasure to her heart. As one commentator said, “she engaged in deep reflection on what was taking place” (Darrell Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, p. 222).

See, this trip had not gone the way she expected. She was forced to travel to Bethlehem while very much pregnant. She was forced to sleep in a cold, damp barn. She gave birth to her baby and she was forced to lay him in a trough. When these shepherds showed up with this news, she realized she was right where God wanted her to be. She knew this entire scene was ordained of God.

Think of this. The people God used to bring great joy and calm to Mary were shepherds. Not the religious elite.

Response #4 - The shepherds went back to their flocks. **2:20**

I love that. They did not go to Jerusalem to lecture the religious leaders of the religion.

They went back to work and they were praising God for all they had heard and seen. What an amazing night it was. What an amazing story. I love what one commentator said, God is a sovereign God and He is a God full of surprises.

PARTING THOUGHTS:

- 1) No matter how insignificant you may think you are, you stay faithful to God and God will Use you to influence others.**
- 2) Don't be shocked if the people who minister to you the most when you are down are the least likely you would ever expect.**
- 3) Jesus Christ is the God/Savior/Messiah/King and He can and will bring great joy into your life if you let Him into you life.**