

Series: Characters in the Christmas Story

THE SHEPHERDS

LUKE 2:8-20

Text:

Introduction:

The Christmas season can be a dangerous time!

There is a danger that we hear the Christmas story so often that it become too familiar. There is a danger that we will lose the significance of the message because we are too familiar with it.

As we consider these characters today let's not just listen with a heart of familiarity but rather let's let the Lord show us what it is that we need to learn today.

We will consider the announcement of the birth of Christ.

We could see how God might choose to announce the birth of Christ to Herod the king.

We could see how He would want to announce the birth in a splendid ceremony in the Temple led by the High Priest.

But we have trouble understanding why He would choose a band of shepherds.

The announcement of the birth of the Son of God is not made to a king in a palace. It is not made to a priest in a temple. It is not made to the wealthy, or to the most important people in the land. The announcement of the birth of the Messiah; of the One Who would grow up to die on a cross for the sins of the lost, was made to a group of shepherds.

This account of God's announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds contains some very important truths.

When these shepherds met the Good Shepherd their lives changed forever.

That is the most important message in this story.

Note:

1. THE ASTONISHMENT THEY EXPERIENCED (vs. 9)

Luke 2:9

⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

The Bible introduces us to a group of shepherds, who are out in the fields at night, keeping the flocks with which they have been entrusted.

For them, this was just another night with the sheep.

The suddenly the normalcy of that evening was shattered and the Bible says, **“they were sore afraid.”**

I believe that God chose the shepherds because He wanted to show that His love and His grace is available to all; that He is not a respecter of persons. He does not show more respect to kings than he does to hourly wage earners.

Notice not only “The Astonishment They Experienced” but also:

2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT THEY RECEIVED (vs. 10-14)

Luke 2:10-14

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Note with me that the message the angel brought from God spoke to their most immediate need. When the angel said, “**fear not**,” the Bible says that they were “**sore afraid**.”

When the messenger suddenly appeared the shepherds reacted like a normal human would they were terribly afraid.

A. The Announcement They Received Was Personal

The angel said, “**unto you is born this day...**” The message from Heaven is that God is interested in the individual.

When the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, He came as the Savior of the world, but He also came to be your Savior.

When the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, He came as the Savior of the world, but He also came to be your Savior. Praise God! It's amazing when I think of Him dying for the sins of many, but He died for me!

The announcement they received was not only personal but also:

B. The Announcement They Received Was Powerful

The angel speaks to them about a baby. Not just any baby, but a special baby.

A baby that is identified by three special names.

The message of a birth was not unusual, but the message of this birth was extraordinary, because this child was different from every other child that had ever, or would ever be born into the world.

The titles given to him by the angel declare His uniqueness.

- He Is Called the Saviour

He is the One Who would give His life for the sins of His people. He is the One Who robed His deity in humanity and came into this world to die on the cross.

He is the One who came to do what all the sacrifices and bloodshed in the tabernacle and the temple could never do.

- He Is Called the Christ

He is the One promised from the beginning.

He is the One God said would come.

- He Is Called the Lord

This title identifies Him as God.

This little baby was the One Who spoke the universe into existence.

He is the One Who formed man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

He is the One Who controls the paths of the planets and the galaxies.

He is the One Who permits the movement of the most minute piece of dust.

He is the Lord of all! Yet, He lies in Bethlehem, in the person of a helpless baby!

Notice too that this news “**will be to all people.**” This news is not just for a privileged few.

Scripture says, “**Whosoever will let him come.**”

Jesus came for pay for the sins of all who would respond to His message in believing faith.

He is available to all.

Notice “The Astonishment They Experienced” and “The Announcement They Received” but also:

3. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT THEY OFFERED (vs. 15-16)

Luke 2:15-16

¹⁵ And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. ¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

They shepherds hear the message of the angels and they react. How they responded to that message altered the course of their lives.

Notice what they could have done:

- They Could Have Debated It

They could have sat down and discussed what they should do. Could they afford to leave the sheep?

What if something happened while they were gone?

Sometimes we actually talk ourselves out of responding in faith.

- They Could Have Rejected It

They could have said, "This is not for me! This message is just too unbelievable."

Some people believe the Gospel message is too farfetched.

- They Could Have Debated It

They could have said, "This is not for me! This message is just too unbelievable."

Some people believe the Gospel message is too farfetched.

But the shepherds chose to believe.

Their faith is revealed in their words, they did not say, "Let us go and see if these things are true."

They said, "let us now go and see this thing that has come to pass."

They responded in pure faith.

It is not enough to hear about Jesus.

It is not enough to look into the manger.

The truth is that if Jesus were born in Bethlehem a thousand times and not within your heart, you will still be eternally lost.

You can get all sentimental at Christmas, but if Christ is not in your heart, it is a mockery of the reason that he came.

What they actually did is what changed their lives, v. 15-16. They simply took the message at face value and went to Bethlehem to see the Christ child. That is the only response to God's invitation that will bring salvation to the soul.

Close:

Hearing about Jesus is one thing, but seeing Him for yourself makes all the difference in life. When they met Him for themselves, they wanted others to know about Him.

Luke 2:17

¹⁷ And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

On the way back to their flocks, they told everyone they met about the baby that had changed their lives, and about the message the angel had given to them.

Luke 2:18

¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

How about us?

What have we done with Jesus?

Who have we shared this message with?