

Shepherd

Series: The Glory of Christmas

Luke 2:8-15

December 12, 2021

Welcome again to worship on this third Sunday of Advent. Our Advent series is called “The Glory of Christmas” This is a series produced by the Skit Guys. These videos have been a whole lot of fun, and I suspect they were shot here in Ohio somewhere.

Mary is the 31-week pregnant former soccer mom with two kids in college whose plans were changed. Our God knows the plans He has for all of us. As crazy as those plans may seem at times, they are plans for our welfare and not for our evil. They are plans to give us hope and a future. And that future includes a capacity to experience and enjoy the glory of Christmas.

Joseph is a young kid that has no idea what he is doing. He’s like Mary’s Joseph, radically underqualified for all he’s about to encounter. But that is the kind of people God uses: the most unlikely folks to do the biggest things. It seems like those are the ones He always picks because He is a God who will never give up on us.

Today, we are going to learn about the Shepherd. Now, let me give you some background of shepherding at the time of Jesus’ birth.

Shepherding had a long and important history among the people for food, clothing, and for sacrifices. All the way back in Genesis 13, we see that Abram had much livestock, including sheep. Sheep were well suited, for the terrain of the area required surefooted animals that could survive on whatever was available. Likewise, his grandson Jacob was a shepherd.

Of course, one of the more famous shepherds was David. Why is that?

Well, the youngest boy in the family became the shepherd of the sheep. As the older son grows up, he transfers his energies from sheep raising to helping the father with sowing, plowing, and harvesting the crops, and passes on the shepherd’s task to the next younger boy. And so, the job is passed from older to younger until the youngest of all becomes the family shepherd. Such must have been the custom when the prophet Samuel went to the house of Jesse, who raised eight sons.¹

Then [Samuel] asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” Jesse answered, “I still have the youngest son. He is out taking care of the sheep.”²

David, being the youngest of eight sons, became the family shepherd, and did not relinquish that job until he joined Saul’s court.

Why is that important? Well, most of the time, when you Google search for pictures of the shepherds receiving the angelic message, the men are adults, even white haired old men. But that is not how it was. The shepherds were probably young, even boys, though one or more of them may have been adults.

I find that pretty cool. Maybe there was an adult, but more likely, it was teens, even boys, who saw and heard the angels announce the birth of Jesus. Not the image we usually have.

Just as our shepherd in our video is not what we expect.

¹ Manners and Customs of Bible Lands, “The Shepherd”

² 1 Samuel 16:11 (NCV)

VIDEO: SHEPHERD

One important aspect of the glory of Christmas is that it is God's gift for everyone. No matter who you are, where you are from, what you look like, or even what you smell like, the baby Jesus who was born in Bethlehem was the Savior of the world intended for all people. God's planned target of salvation through His Son is the most glorious gift meant for everybody everywhere.

Look again at the clear message the angel of the Lord entrusted to the shepherds that first Christmas night while out in the fields with their sheep. Luke 2 is where we find it recorded.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and 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 among those with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."³

All means everyone. The glory of Christmas is that God's intention was that nobody gets left out. Every person created in the image of God was, is, and forever will be a person God desires for Jesus to save. God sent Jesus to be the Savior to be born to rescue everyone. While the shepherds out in the fields were the ones chosen to begin sharing the message that was entrusted to them, God's intentions were for them to be the first among many to receive the good news of Christmas and the glory of who Jesus came to save: everyone! This glorious, inclusive truth is echoed throughout the New Testament.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.⁴

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.⁵

The line that "Dan", our shepherd in the video, delivered at the manger was a poignant one. He said, "God asked me to be the keeper of the most important message that's ever been kept." While certainly true and a glorious responsibility, this invitation that started with the shepherds was not meant to end with them. The initial sharing of the story with the shepherds was only the initial link of a global communication chain.

As "Dan" the shepherd said, "God sent the greatest gift ever, the prince of peace." The peace we can have with Holy God comes only through the one who embodied it while wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger: Jesus. What

³ Luke 2:8-15 (ESV)

⁴ 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

⁵ John 3:16-18 (ESV)

Jesus came to do through His perfect life, death and resurrection is what would bring all people peace with God as He dealt with and paid the price for the sin of everyone. This is what the glory of Christmas would lead to one day. And this price of peace was so costly because it was intended for everybody.

How will you respond to the glory of Christmas and who will be the next person you choose to share such glory with this Christmas?

Once upon a time, there was a man who worked very hard just to keep food on the table for his family. This particular year a few days before Christmas, he was upset with his little five-year-old daughter after learning that she had used up the family's only roll of expensive gold wrapping paper.

As money was tight, he became even more upset when on Christmas Eve he saw that the child had used all of the expensive gold paper to decorate one shoe box she had put under the Christmas tree. He also was concerned about where she had gotten money to buy what was in the shoe box.

Nevertheless, the next morning the little girl, filled with excitement, brought the gift box to her father and said, "This is for you, Daddy!"

As he opened the box, the father was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, now regretting how he had got upset with her.

But when he opened the shoe box, he found it was empty and again he was upset. "Don't you know, young lady," he said harshly, "when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside the package!"

The little girl looked up at him with sad tears rolling from her eyes and whispered: "Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into it until it was all full."

The father was crushed. He fell on his knees and put his arms around his precious little girl. He begged her to forgive him for his unnecessary anger.

In a very real sense, each of us has been given an invisible golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from God on this Christmas. The kisses come in the form of Baby Jesus our Lord and Savior. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold.