

Sermon Title: The Angels and the Shepherds

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Scripture Reference: Luke 2:8-15

Thesis: **The shepherds were the ones who first got the announcement after the birth of Jesus;**

Purpose: **This shows us that Jesus coming was a celebration meant for all of us.**

Key Word: "The Christmas Message"

## I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Luke 2:8-15** (Pages 58 Black / 71 Red)

### A) The Setting:

- 1) **This Advent we have been looking at the Christmas story from the perspective of the Angels.**
  - (a) Do you believe in Angels?
  - (b) Do you believe the Christmas narrative as written in the gospels?
  - (c) If you are among those who celebrate Christmas for its spiritual significance . . .
- 2) **Sadly, if you do, you are in the declining numbers of those who do.**
  - (a) This is according to a survey released Wednesday, December 13, 2017, by the Pew Research Center.
  - (b) The new study does suggest American attitudes are changing.
  - (c) 90% of Americans celebrate Christmas in some form, a figure that has "hardly budged at all" since its survey of 2013, the center said.
  - (d) In 2017, 55% of Americans said they celebrated Christmas as a religious holiday representing a drop of 4% since the 2013 survey.
- 3) **The changes in attitudes are reflected in how people said they planned to spend their time during Christmas.**
  - (a) In 2013, 86% of celebrants said they would spend Christmas Eve or Christmas Day with loved ones, and 54% said they would attend a religious service.
  - (b) In 2017 those also dropped between 3 and 4%
- 4) **The most seismic change captured by the survey, from a theological standpoint, may be the declining number of people who said they believed the biblical story of Christmas accurately reflected historical events.**
  - (a) **The survey asked respondents about their belief in four parts of the biblical Christmas story:**
    - (i) that an angel heralded the birth of Jesus;
    - (ii) that it was a virgin birth;
    - (iii) that wise men were guided to baby Jesus by a star;
    - (iv) and that he was placed in a manger.
  - (b) **Only 57% of Americans believe in all four, down from 65% in 2014.**
- 5) **Well, if you have come today to hear what the Bible teaches;**
  - (a) Then I want you to know that I am among those who believe the Christmas narrative as presented in God's Word.
  - (b) And I hope you are too; for if we cannot believe what God's Word teaches we are left without the hope of Christmas.
  - (c) For what can we believe if it were not for God sending His Son to save His People and restore us to Himself.
- 6) **In today's message, we are going to look at the Angels that appear to the Shepherds.**
  - (a) No fake news here;
  - (b) Just the read deal and God's Holy Spirit guided the writers to record.
- 7) **In our study with Zacharias and Mary we had the Angel Gabriel who came to deliver the Good News of God's Son coming.**
  - (a) But this time we don't have a single angel; we have a host of angels.
  - (b) An army, a great multitude, a large number of angels who will fill the skies.
- 8) **But before we read, I want to try and set the scene so to speak.**
  - (a) To the south of Jerusalem are the fields where the Temple sheep are kept.
  - (b) A great number of sheep were needed for the daily sacrifices offered to God for the sins of the people.

- 9) **These shepherds were in charge of caring for the Temple sheep for only sheep in perfect condition could be offered as a sacrifice to God.**
- Shepherds were smelly outdoors men who were not well thought of in society.
  - When I was in college taking Fire Science we had a man taking classes from a small rural community who was a dairy farmer.
  - He would come into class after working in the barns and fields all day taking care of the cattle.
  - I felt sorry for this fellow.
  - He was a nice man; but no one wanted to sit near him.
  - There would be an invisible bubble of empty desks all around him because of the smell.
- 10) **This is how society viewed shepherds in Jesus time.**
- Isn't it ironic that the shepherds who kept the sacrificial sheep . . .
  - Were the first ones to learn about God's sacrificial Lamb who had come to "**Save His people from their sins?**"
- 11) **Imagine a dark night carefully watching over the sheep to protect them from predators.**
- A campfire burning earlier used to cook their evening meal now used for warmth.
  - The stars brightly twinkling in the sky on this cool night.
- 12) **Now so that we can get a little feel for what it might have been like for the shepherds I want you to help me out.**
- I want you to open the pew Bibles to Luke 2:8-15. (Pages 58 Black / 71 Red)**
  - Find **Luke Chapter 2, verse 14**; and when I get to that spot in my reading I want you to join me and read it out loud.
  - Can you do that?** Just join in and read in unison with me when I get to that verse.
  - This will give us a little inkling of the multitude of angels saying these words.
  - Luke 2, beginning with verse 8.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- Now, step back for a moment.**
  - Imagine you're God and you want to announce the most amazing, incredible, joyous news ever; an event which will literally change the course of history.
  - The birth of the One who will be the Savior of the whole world.**
  - The One whom the nation of Israel has been waiting, hoping, and praying to come.
  - AND . . . Finally, He has come!**
    - To whom would you announce it to?
    - And whom would you invite to come and witness this great event?
- When a child is born to a member of British royalty; for instance,**
  - When Kate and William, Duke and Duchess of Windsor had their son . . .**
    - They didn't send a messenger down to the docks to break the news first to the longshoremen and the fishmongers.
    - They didn't issue personal invitations to the cab drivers of London to come visit their new born infant at Windsor castle.
  - Announcements or invitations that were sent out were printed in gold leaf and hand delivered to political leaders and foreign heads of state.
- The point is that you would expect an event like the birth of Christ to be announced FIRST to the most important people in the nation; to:**
  - Political leaders
  - Religious leaders
  - Military leaders.
  - Wealthy merchants.
  - Men and women of distinction.
  - The press corps? MAYBE.
- But for Jesus it was none of the societal elite who got the word.**

- (a) Yes, there were some foreign kings who figured it out by following the star of Bethlehem, and they informed Herod a couple years later.
- (b) This may have been because they had heard about the prophecy from Daniel when he was in Babylonia.
- (c) **But none got an angelic messenger, an angelic choir, or an engraved invitation.**
- 5) **Only these few, poor, shepherds, the social and religious outcasts, received the announcement.**
  - (a) Can you imagine the conductor of the angel choir announcing this to them?
  - (b) It's as if the Mormon Tabernacle Choir were to rehearse all year to perform Handel's Messiah, **but then give the concert for just the eight guys on the building's maintenance crew.**
- 6) **So why? Why did God do this?**
  - (a) Why did He send His angels to announce the birth of Christ to these shepherds, to invite them, and them only, to come and see the child?
  - (b) **Perhaps . . .**
    - (i) Could it be that God wanted to show His LOVE does not discriminate on the basis of class, or wealth, or social standing?
    - (ii) Could it be that God doesn't respect kings and princes above common laborers?
    - (iii) Could it be that God does not even value priests or pastors over the people in the pews?
- 7) **God does not show favoritism;**
  - (a) He does not give preferential treatment to one group of people over another.
  - (b) **His love is available to all on the same basis – faith in Jesus Christ, and faith alone.**

TS: **Let's learn a little more about . . .**

## II) Body: (Key Points)

### A) Key Point #1: **Shepherds**

- 1) **Being a shepherd was not a 40-hour a week job.**
  - (a) They didn't come home at night.
  - (b) They were often with the sheep 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
  - (c) During the day, they led the sheep to grass and water.
  - (d) They watched while the sheep grazed.
- 2) **And at night, they led the sheep back to a pen counting to make sure none had been lost.**
  - (a) They actually slept in front of the door to the sheep pen in order to guard against theft and animal attack.
  - (b) They kept an eye out for predators like wolves, bears, and the like.
  - (c) And when necessary became the protector for the sheep fighting off the would be predators.
- 3) **A good shepherd could identify each one of his sheep by sight.**
  - (a) He knew his sheep and they knew him.
  - (b) **Jesus said, "The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice." – John 10:2-4 (NIV)**
- 4) **Being a shepherd was lonely, wearisome, usually very boring and tedious, and sometimes extremely dangerous.**
  - (a) It gave them a lot of contact with sheep, but very little exposure to people.
  - (b) No wonder that David in the Old Testament, the shepherd who became king of Israel, was such an accomplished musician.
  - (c) **Many shepherds learned to play the flute or some other instrument, because they had hours and hours with nothing to do but watch sheep eat grass.**
  - (d) Does that make you feel any better about your lot in life?
- 5) Jesus didn't call himself the GOOD Priest or the GOOD Religious leader; no, Jesus said, **"I am the GOOD SHEPHERD" . . .**

TS: **Next, let us see . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **The Response of the Shepherds**

- 1) **First, there was Fear;** I bet when the night skies illuminated and filled with Angels who began to speak that the shepherds fell down in fear and trembling . . . for I am sure they thought they were going to die!
  - (a) No wonder the first words spoken by the Angels were "DO not be afraid!"
  - (b) You have nothing to fear; because we are "**here to bring you GOOD NEWS of GREAT JOY!**"
- 2) **Second, the shepherds listen to what the Angels told to them.**
  - (a) As this Great heavenly choir erupted in praise . . . I'll bet it was beautiful, like the NKJV put it: "**Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth and good will toward men!**"
  - (b) It was better when we said it together; but with the angels it will be even better!
- 3) **The third thing the shepherds did was believe for they wanted to go and see for themselves this thing they were told about.**
  - (a) Was it some sort of mass hallucination?
  - (b) Could it be for real?
  - (c) Is it true, let's go find out?
- 4) **I'll bet much to the surprise of Mary and Joseph they came in and said, WOW!**
  - (a) Let me tell you what just happened out in the fields.
  - (b) The angels came and you should have heard them angels sing!
  - (c) **It was magnificent; I wish you could have been there.**

TS: **What should be our response to this Christmas story?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

- A) **In today's scripture we read that God came to earth to live as a man.**
  - 1) He is a model of how we should live our lives.
  - 2) He was authenticated through His many miraculous signs and wonders.
  - 3) And He suffered and died to atone for the sins of all that we might experience forgiveness, redemption, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.
  - 4) **The world is quickly de-evolving headed for destruction as evident by the decline in those who are willing to believe God's Word.**
    - (a) It may look like the moral compass has gone askew.
    - (b) And that the enemy is escalating both in control and influence.
    - (c) But I am here to tell you that because of Jesus' coming to earth and dying on the cross THE BATTLE IS ALREADY WON!
  - 5) **The Bible teaches us that when it looks like all is about to come to a cataclysmic end our Lord will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords!**
    - (a) He will establish His Kingdom and rule forever.
    - (b) He will bring Peace, Hope, Joy and Love finally to mankind.
  - 6) **Instead of hopeless despair Christians should rejoice with the assurance of God's promise.**
    - (a) God always keeps His promises.
    - (b) And now there has been made a way for us to be restored into the kind of relationship God intend for us.
- B) **The stories of the first Advent give us hope to watch for His Second Advent.**
  - 1) Before Jesus returns God will take His Church out of this world and remove His hand of protection for a time and we will see suffering even worse than we are now experiencing.
  - 2) It could happen at any time as the stage is set and the prophetic Word is coming true before our very eyes; Jesus' Second Advent is imminent.
  - 3) **So let us share the hope of the Good News . . . while time still remains.**
  - 4) **Some are giving their lives to try and share God's Good news.**
    - (a) There are lies being promoted by the enemy that there are many ways to God.

(b) Or that we serve the same God by different names; those ROADS lead only to HELL's destruction and ruin.

(c) Jesus said in his sermon on the mount in Matthew 7:12-14, "**Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**"

(d) Jesus also said in John 14:6 "**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**"

5) **So, we must not be lulled into thinking it is okay for everyone to find their own path to God.**

(a) Jesus is the way; the only way.

(b) **People should see that we are different because we serve a living Lord:**

(i) The only one to defeat death and be raised to life.

(ii) The one who tells us to love our enemies.

(iii) The one who sends His Holy Spirit to live in us and help guide and make us into a new creation.

6) **God used His angels to tell the story to a few; but it is up to us to share the story as the Spirit of God leads us and gives us opportunities.**

(a) God came to rescue the world from destruction.

(b) It may not look like it now; but we are in the last chapters of God's promised plan.

7) **After the shepherds came and saw that the story was true what did they do?**

(a) They went out and told all they knew what about had happened.

(b) That is what we are supposed to do as followers of Jesus.

(c) Share the Christmas story; **Go shout it from the mountain tops!**

IV) Invitation: **Let us pray!**