



For all our guests, those watching online, and all our covenant members, welcome! Why are days like today so important? Because we stand in the tradition of the Lord's community and proclaim don't be afraid, for look, we proclaim good news of great joy for all people!

**"Joy Worth Sharing" (Luke 2:8-15) pg # 908??**

Last week we left off with the haunting words, "there was no room for them in the inn." In the same proximity to these no vacancy hotels, shepherds were staying out in the fields. I find it interesting that the new born Messiah who had no room to lay his head was announced to men who often slept under the stars. **Shepherds** in Jesus' day were a riddle. Typically, they were uneducated, poor, and lived out in the elements with their animals. Most did not own land so they "borrowed" land to graze their flocks sometimes creating tension. Shepherds were generally tolerated but not esteemed in the ancient world, as one rabbi called them *dishonest and unclean* according to the standards of the law.

But the biblical record reminds us that David, the greatest king, the man after God's own heart was a shepherd. Moses, lived as a shepherd for 40 years when Yahweh appeared to him. Psalm 23 shows us that the Lord is our Shepherd, I shall not want. Israel understood themselves to be a nation of shepherds. **Socially, shepherds were outcasts and outsiders, biblically they were part of the family.**

So we find these men out in the fields, typically during the months of March—November, receiving an unlikely heavenly telegram. These religious outcasts and sinners were the first recipients, the **divine market strategy** if you will, of the good news and the exact community that Jesus came to save. **The shepherds heard and received joy worth sharing.**

**God wants you to know about Him (9-10)** We find the shepherds doing what shepherds do, in the fields, keeping watch. I believe it's significant they weren't at the Temple. God's revelation can reach you in a field, in a bar, in a mechanic shop, at a school, **exactly where you are**. His grace is no longer confined by geography. Then, boom, an angel of the Lord stood. **An αγγελος; is a messenger, envoy, one who is sent.** The angel was doing what it was created to do, **(Amazon prime of heaven)** deliver a message. **Why is this important?** The presence of the angel is a heavenly **reminder** that God wants you to know about Him. The heavens declare the glory of God, the expanse proclaims the work of His hands, and the angels bring good news! *Our Savior and Lord is not hidden but revealed!* **Get to know him, draw near to Him!**

The angels **stand** before them. **Stood is a common Lucan term for standing near or beside someone and is often used to describe supernatural appearances.** I find relief knowing that the angels **did not tower** over and lecture these filthy shepherds but they **stood near**.

It's remarkable that the divine glory now shines around them, not around the manger, Mary, Joseph, or Messiah. His glory shined around the angel who delivered the gospel message. Not history, but the Word of God has splendor. **God wants you to know about Him.**

**His Glory is the going-public of his holiness.** *It is the way he puts his holiness on display for people to apprehend. So, the glory of God is the holiness of God made manifest. - John Piper.* Can you imagine such a bright light in the midst of the evening would have been a blinding powerful sight. **The light, the glory, the angels, proclaim that Yahweh wants you to know about Him.** But never mistake the knowledge about God as personal relationship with God. Knowledge and revelation set the stage for communion, but they can never take the place of personal relationship.

The shepherd's response to the message was terror. Apparently they were not going to snap out of it because the angel had to say look, "don't be afraid." *Can you imagine how embarrassing this is for a salt of the earth, manly, shepherd. For eternity, the Gospel record canonized their fear. What do you think David said when he met them in heaven? I killed a bear, a lion, and Goliath, and ya'll were scared of an angel???* **Here is the message:** good news, great joy, all people, for who? For you!

**God wants you to know Him (11-12)** This is not your normal season's greetings. This greeting is personal, supernatural, and it is transformational. Hear what the angel speaks: look I proclaim to you (10), for all people (10), a Savior was born for you (11), this will be a sign for you (12). **It's one thing to know the story, it's another to know the Savior.** God wants you to know Him. *Sadly, we are often content knowing about him and never taking the step of faith towards him.*

What is this **for you** message? First, the fact that sinners, rebellious, and shepherds could know God, is good news. The announcement is good news and the birth causes great joy. If anything could be said of knowing and hearing the gospel it is this: **good news.** If nothing else can be said of the church of Christ, let it be said that we bring good news! Those who receive the good news are to share the good news. Are you known as someone who always brings good news? **Evangelize** simply means to bring good news. The news is incredibly good (gospel) because of the Messiah. The birth of the Messiah is the genesis of our new birth in the Spirit and restoration of a broken spiritual relationships. **God wants you to know Him!**

When does this happen? Today! This event is not a distant reality; it comes now. There is a unique urgency in the gospel. *2Cor. 6:1 Working together with him, we also appeal to you, "Don't receive the grace of God in vain." 2 For he says: At an acceptable time I listened to you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!* God wants you to know Him and He wants you to know Him today. Don't wait. What does the resurrection mean for us? Abundant life (knowing God today) and eternal life (knowing God forever).

**God wants you to See and Sing (13-15)** This child is Savior, Messiah, and Lord. This title must have been a treasure for the early church as Paul used the same divine formula: *Phil 3:20 but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.* **Now what?**

Obviously the shepherds were thinking the same. The angel continues, **this will be a sign for you, you will find**. A newborn child in swaddling clothes would have been normal in Palestine (like finding a newborn wrapped in the white blanket, w/ blue and pink stripes), but finding a baby boy lying in a manger would be extremely small. Yet, the thrust of the angels command is not the sign but the later, you will find. Inherent in this detail is the fact that the shepherd would seek—not stand still. **Are you seeking? I believe Jesus wants to raise up generations of seekers.**

**Matt. 7:7** — “**Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. ...** You will find Him. God wants you to know Him. He wants you to know Him today more than you ever have. Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking, **Come and See!**

**Suddenly!** Luke gives us a rare glance at heavenly praise. One scholar said, “**angelic praise serves the same function literarily for Luke as do choruses in Greek dramas—they supply commentary.**”

This is the chorus: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors. The angelic praise offers two ideas. The heavens rejoice and praise God for salvation’s outworking. **Luke 15:7 I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don’t need repentance.** The highest heaven is singing glory because of the Messiah.

Secondly, the people to whom God draws near through Jesus will experience harmony and benefits that God bestows on his own. Peace—heavenly peace! **If you only do two things this Christmas, remember you were create to see and sing!**

What an unusual birth. What an unusual message. Messiah’s life will contain an unusual bookend for a king, since he was born in an animal room and will die with robbers.

The Lord wants you to know about Him.  
Yahweh wants you to know Him.

*Now that you have heard this good news, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to him using words like this:*

*Jesus today I **recognize** it is because of my (sin) bad actions that I need you.*

*I **believe** Christ came to live, die and was raised from the death—to rescue me from my sin.*

***Forgive** me. I turn from me and put my trust in You.*

*Know that Jesus is Lord and King of all and I will **follow** Him.*

Messiah has created you to see and sing! See well, Sing Loud! **Luke 2:15** — **When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and**

see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." How do we respond? I leave you with the words of the Shepherds, this is joy worth sharing, "Let's we go."

# Notes

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**Luke 2:8** In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock.

## Shepherds

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> century shepherds were at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder (Hamilton)
  - Typically- uneducated, poor, and lived among their animals in the elements, sometimes smelling like the animals
  - Most did not own land so they grazed their flocks on the land of their neighbors (sometimes creating tension)
  - Shepherds were tolerated but not esteemed by neighbors and the general population
  - When Luke tells us that shepherds were invited to the birth narrative this would have been unthinkable!!
    - Present day, often shepherds live in tents or cargo containers in the region of Bethlehem
  - Why were shepherds invited?
    - One shepherd (Ibrahim) said humility
  - Why would God refer to himself as something of lower rank?
  - It seems high theology should be given to low people (Anyabwile, 43).
- The assessment of the shepherds is also a riddle. The rabbinic texts critical of shepherds are not weighty enough to cancel out the positive evaluation of shepherds in biblical literature (Bovon, 86). Israel understood themselves to be a nation of shepherds.
- In general shepherds were dishonest (*Sanh.* 25b) and unclean according to the standards of the law. They represent the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came. Such outcasts were the first recipients of the good news. (NAC)
- **Out in the fields.** Shepherds were out in the fields with their flocks usually during the months of March to November. Nothing in the two birth accounts ties Jesus' birth to any specific date.
- Due to the proximity to Jerusalem, some scholars have suggested that the flocks here are the temple flocks raised for sacrifice. This narrative would have challenged the values of many religious people, who despised shepherds; shepherds' work kept them from participation in the religious activities of their communities. (IVP)

**9** Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people:

- **Stood**

1. Stood is a common Lucan term for standing near or beside someone and is often used to describe angelic or supernatural appearances (ECNT, 214).

- - (doxa)

1. *The glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness. It is the going-public of his holiness. It is the way he puts his holiness on display for people to apprehend. So, the glory of God is the holiness of God made manifest. –John Piper*
2. *Such a bright light in the midst of the evening would have been an impressive sight; Luke intends the reader to visualize the contrast (ECNT, 214).*
- 3.

- The announcement itself contains two descriptions: the announcement is good news, and the birth causes great joy (ECNT, 215).
  1. Luke’s commonly placing joy next to salvation is a key idea in his Gospel (ECNT, 215).
- The announcement is significant for three reasons (ECNT, 216)
  1. The reason the message is good news is that the Messiah is born
  2. This even is not a distant reality; it comes now
  3. Contains three Christological terms—Savior, Christ, Lord.
- **I bring you good news.** This translates the Greek verb *euangelizō*, which means *to preach the good news*. The noun (*euangelion*) is translated by the word “gospel.” This verb is found eleven times in the Gospels, and ten of these are found in Luke. See comments on 1:19.
- **That will be for all the people.** Are Gentiles included here, or is this a reference only to the Jewish people? Luke envisioned the gospel as being for all people, including the Gentiles (Acts 15:1–29; 18:10); but here, as in 3:21; 7:29; 8:47, the people of Israel were primarily in Luke’s mind. The singular “people” refers everywhere else in Luke to the people of Israel
- It is remarkable that the divine glory shines not around the manger but around the angels. Not history, but the Word of God has splendor (Bovon, 87).

**11** Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

- Jesus at his birth was already both Christ and Lord, for the one born to Mary in Bethlehem is the same person who is raised in glory and given the authority to be Lord and Christ. See Introduction 8 (4). No doubt for Luke’s readers this description of the child would have far greater theological meaning than for its original hearers. These three titles also appear together in Phil 3:20.
- **This shall be a sign.** Since the odds of finding another newborn baby boy lying in a manger would be extremely small, this would function as a sign of identity for the shepherds.
  - A newborn child in swaddling clothes is normal in Palestine, though not in Egypt. What is unusual and thus becomes the sign, is the manger (Bovon, 89).
  - Messiah’s life will contain an unusual bookend for a king, since he was born in an animal room and will die with robbers (ECNT, 219)
- Due to the proximity to Jerusalem, some scholars have suggested that the flocks here are the temple flocks raised for sacrifice. This narrative would have challenged the values of many religious people, who despised shepherds; shepherds’ work kept them from participation in the religious activities of their communities. (Manners)

- A manger is a feeding trough used for cattle, sheep, donkeys, or horses. Archaeologists have discovered stone mangers in the horse stables of Ahab at Megiddo. They were cut out of limestone and were approximately three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and two feet deep. Other ancient mangers were made of masonry. Many Palestinian homes consisted of one large room that contained an elevated section and a lower section. The elevated section was the family's living quarters, while the lower section housed the family's animals. Usually a manger, in the form of a masonry box or a stone niche, was located in the lower section. Mangers were also put in cave stables or other stalls. The manger referred to in our text-verse may have been in a cave stable or other shelter. (Manners)
- **Today**
  - Underscores the fulfillment of prophecy and its present relevance. If God is acting for us, we should hear his voice today (Bovon, 88).

**Luke 2:13** Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

**Luke 2:14** Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to people he favors!

- Luke gives a rare glance at heavenly praise (ECNT, 219).
- To know God is for Luke, to praise God and to worship God (Bovon, 90)
- Peace" refers here to the fullness of blessing which the Savior/Christ/Lord brings and is essentially a synonym for salvation (cf. Acts 10:36).
- Angelic praise serves the same function literarily for Luke as do choruses in Greek dramas--- they supply commentary (ECNT, 219).
- The angelic praise offers two ideas (ECNT, 220)
  1. The heavens rejoice and praise God for salvation's outworking
  2. The people to whom God draws near through Jesus will experience harmony and benefits that God bestows on his own.

**Luke 2:15** When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

- "This thing" is literally *this word* as in Luke 2:17, 19, but "this word" can refer to an event as it does here.
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# Illustrations

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It is as if you were standing before a dam 10,000 feet high filled with millions of gallons of water. And in

# Application

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