

WHEN SHEPHERDS OUT SANG ANGELS

I. Luke 2:8-20

A. Last Sunday we launched into the Incarnation Season. We talked about the epic journey of God the Son from throne to manger to cross to empty tomb and back to throne. As the Apostle's Creed puts it: "We believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. On the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of God the Father almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead..." This is perhaps the best summary of the Gospel outside of Scripture we have and most believers down through the centuries have stood shoulder to shoulder in embracing it.

B. Martin Luther, grandpa of the Reformation, said of the Incarnation: "The Son of God did not want to be seen and found in heaven. Therefore He descended from heaven into this humility and came to us in our flesh, laid Himself into the womb of His mother and into the manger and went on to the cross. This was the ladder that He placed on earth so that we might ascend to God on it. This is the way you must take."

C. In our text today we encounter shepherds visited upon by angels. You'll note that the angels did not show up in Jerusalem. They did not appear in the temple. They did not meet up with the Jewish leaders and Hebrew scholars. In the fields outside the small village of Bethlehem a celestial portal opened up as light & glory invaded the shepherds' darkness. It's not a stretch to call these men "lowly shepherds." The wise & wealthy Magi were possibly already following that moving star but these mutton-keepers were blessed with an angelic visitation. Let's follow Luke's narrative...

D. Luke 2:8-20 (ESV) takes us to those dark Bethlehem fields...

1) V8: 8 *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. (Many scholars believe the Bethlehem sheep being watched were being raised to be sacrificial lambs. These sheep may have also descended from the very sheep the shepherd boy David protected with his trusty sling.)*

2) V9: 9 *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. (One angel to start. **Gabriel?** Perhaps. But not a harp-playing naked baby angel. A heavenly being doused in light, fierce and warrior-like in appearance, not one to be trifled with, a creature fashioned for worship and heralding good news!)*

3) V10-11: 10 *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. 11* *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (To lowly shepherds: 'The Savior has landed! One small step for God; one giant hope for mankind. You're hearing it here first!')*

4) V12-13a: 12 *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a Baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13* *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host (Out of nowhere thousands of angels appear. It doesn't say they used*

a ladder. Or an escalator. They just appear! If one angel makes you *sore afraid*, what does a myriad do?! And what were these angels doing?)

5) V13b-14: *13b praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, (Gloria in excelsis Deo!) and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"* (Peace: Eternal Shalom between God and man will be won by this Savior on a cross!)

6) V15-16: *15 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."* **16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. (The Pharisees would've found the scene anticlimactic. But this event was not lost upon these shepherds. They were chosen to hear about it firsthand. The star-trekking Magi followed the star but didn't get visited by a choir of angels. Jewish leaders? Nope! Asking the whereabouts of the Messiah's birth, the Hebrew scholars told the Magi that OT prophecies said it'd happen in Bethlehem. But guess how many of those scholars hiked the 5.5 miles with the wise men? None!)**

7) V17-20: *17 And when they (the shepherds) saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. (Perhaps they swapped angel stories with Mary & Joseph.) 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. (I wonder how their singing compared to the angels? Talk about a joyful noise! But remember the angel's announcement: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." This was not just Israel's long promised Messiah; not just the Savior of the world; it was their Savior and Lord! Theirs! Do angels sing better than shepherds? Probably. But Jesus didn't come to save angels, He came to save people. Even shepherds! Even you and me! On that night a shepherd chorus rang forth from Bethlehem's fields and it had to have been music to Heaven's ears!*

E. What can we learn from the shepherds' response? I suppose they could've gone to the stable with some lambs to offer. But such an offering would've been insufficient. Even gold, frankincense and myrrh seems paltry in comparison to what God was offering in the Gift of His Son. The Shepherds merely brought themselves in response to the invitation to see "This Thing that has happened!" They were among the lost sheep found by the Great Shepherd and they'd never be the same! What joy to be led to the place where we find Christ Jesus our Lord!

F. So have you found Him? Have you found Him who was born in a manger, died on a cross, and forsook a borrowed tomb--all this for your sins? Five years ago I shared this: "Poor shepherds found Him in the hay and wealthy wise men found Him in a house. Disciples found Him by the Sea while others found Him in the countryside. Some found Him in Jerusalem, some in Judea, some in Samaria, others all around the globe. A thief and a Roman centurion found Him at His crucifixion as He suffocated and bled out on the cross. Saul found Him on the way to Damascus to wipe out His followers. Some have found Him in caves and shacks and others in cathedrals and palaces. Some on battlefields, some in hospital rooms, some at church altars, some in the woods, some at sea, and some on their deathbeds. He can be found among those in every nation, tribe, and tongue and He can be found right here and now. Have you found Him?" (My prayer is that you find Him if you have not. And if you have

found Him, that you join in the song of shepherds and angels, the songs of the saints of old and the saints of now, in glorifying and praising God for leading you to Himself!)

*** Close with Prayer...**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Luke 2:8-20 (ESV)

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** 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. **10** 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. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** And this will be a sign for you: you will find a Baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and 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 among those with whom He is pleased!" **15** 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." **16** And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. **17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Quote by Martin Luther

"The Son of God did not want to be seen and found in heaven. Therefore He descended from heaven into this humility and came to us in our flesh, laid Himself into the womb of His mother and into the manger and went on to the cross. This was the ladder that He placed on earth so that we might ascend to God on it. This is the way you must take."

Have You Found Him?

Pastor Steve Bush

"Poor shepherds found Him in the hay and wealthy wise men found Him in a house. Disciples found Him by the Sea while others found Him in the countryside. Some found Him in Jerusalem, some in Judea, some in Samaria, others all around the globe. A thief and a Roman centurion found Him at His crucifixion as He suffocated and bled out on the cross. Saul found Him on the way to Damascus to wipe out His followers. Some have found Him in caves and shacks and others in cathedrals and palaces. Some on battlefields, some in hospital rooms, some at church altars, some in the woods, some at sea, and some on their deathbeds. He can be found among those in every nation, tribe, and tongue and He can be found right here and now. Have you found Him?"

- Excerpt from Pastor Steve's sermon titled, "*Wise Men Still Fall Down and Worship Him*," December 22, 2014.

[Video Clips & Important Articles](#)

The Apostles' Creed - R.C. Sproul, Ligonier Ministries (Whole Series)

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/apostles-creed/>

"Maker of the Universe" - Phil Keaggy Version

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27GUZsrhxJ8>

"When Love Came Down to Earth" - Stuart Townend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEY-3EmqufY>

The Doctrine of Incarnation - D.A. Carson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UOMTr1b6Io>

[Bonus Stuff](#)

[1 Timothy 3:16 \(NIV\)](#)

16 Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

[1 Peter 1:10-12 \(ESV\)](#)

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, **11** inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. **12** It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

[John 1:1-3 & 14 \(ESV\)](#)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made... **14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[Philippians 2:1-13 \(ESV\)](#)

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, **2** complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied

Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Hebrews 1:1-4 (ESV)

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Quote by Wayne Grudem

"[The incarnation] is by far the most amazing miracle of the entire Bible--far more amazing than the resurrection and more amazing even than the creation of the universe. The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join Himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe."

- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Zondervan, p. 563.

Quote by John Piper

"I think what pitching a tent with us implies is that God wants to be on familiar terms with us. He wants to be close. He wants a lot of interaction. If you come into a community and build a huge palace with a wall around it, it says one thing about your desires to be with the people. But if you pitch a tent in my back yard, you will probably use my bathroom and eat often at my table. This is why God became human. He came to pitch a tent in our human back yard so that we would have a lot of dealings with Him."

Look What Has Come To The World

by E. Stanley Jones

In his 1942 devotional *Abundant Living*, E. Stanley Jones, Methodist doctor and missionary to India, writes: "The early Christians did not say in dismay: "*Look what the world has come to,*" but in delight, "*Look what has come to the world.*" They saw not merely the ruin, but the Resource for the reconstruction of that ruin. They saw not merely that sin did abound, but that grace did much more abound. On that assurance the pivot of history swung from blank despair, loss of moral nerve, and fatalism, to faith and confidence that at last sin had met its match."

The Maker of the Universe

Words by F.W. Pitt

Music by Ludwig von Beethoven as well as Phil Keaggy

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27GUZsrhxJ8>

The Maker of the universe
As Man, for man was made a curse.
The claims of Law which He had made
Unto the uttermost He paid.

His holy fingers made the bough
Which grew the thorns that crowned His brow.
The nails that pierced His hands were mined
In secret places He designed.

He made the forest whence there sprung
The tree on which His body hung;
He died upon a cross of wood
Yet made the hill on which it stood.

The sky that darkened o'er His head
By Him above the earth was spread.
The sun that hid from Him its face
By His decree was poised in space.

The spear which spilled His precious blood
Was tempered in the fires of God.
The grave in which His form was laid
Was hewn in rocks His hands had made.

The throne on which He now appears
Was His from everlasting years.
But a new glory crowns His brow
And every knee to Him shall bow.

Augustine's Incarnation Poem

Maker of the sun,
He is made under the sun.
In the Father He remains,
From His mother He goes forth.
Creator of heaven and earth,
He was born on earth under heaven.
Unspeakably wise,
He is wisely speechless.
Filling the world,

He lies in a manger.
Ruler of the stars,
He nurses at His mother's bosom.
He is both great in the nature of God,
And small in the form of a servant.