

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SHEPHERDS

LITTLE KNOWN ADVENT TEXTS #3

Luke 2:8-20

December 11, 2022

1. Simple Folk (v. 8)

The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders (they were not prepared to receive these tidings), but to a company of poor shepherds ^{Matthew Henry}

The shepherds didn't ask God if he was sure he knew what he was doing. Had the angel gone to the theologians, they would have first consulted their commentaries. Had he gone to the elite, they would have looked around to see if anyone was watching. Had he gone to the successful, they would have first looked at their calendars. So he went to the shepherds. Men who didn't have a reputation to protect or an ax to grind or a ladder to climb. Men who didn't know enough to tell God that angels don't sing to sheep and that messiahs aren't found wrapped in rags and sleeping in a feed trough. ^{Max L. Lucado}

The shepherds were plain, downright, honest men, and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them. ^{Matthew Henry}

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 ^(NLT) Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

As afterwards the cross of Christ, so now his manger, was to some foolishness and a stumbling-block, but others saw it, and admired, and praised, the wisdom of God and the power of God. ^{Matthew Henry}

Some Biblical Principles from this:

† God reveals Himself to the simple

– like a child (Mark 10:15 – “I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”)

† God reveals Himself to the humble, those who aren't so full of themselves that they have little or no room for anyone else...

† God reveals Himself to those who will pursue Him – contrast those in Jerusalem who heard about the Magi's quest

† God reveals Himself to those who give HIM the glory – more on that later...

2. Called by God (vv. 9-14)

Peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.

Not: “on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (KJV)

The offer of peace with God – reconciliation...

3. Checking it Out (vv. 15-16)

Such an attitude contrasts sharply with that of the religious leaders who knew where the Baby was to be born but did not take the time or the effort to confirm it for themselves (Matthew 2:5). ^{Walvoord & Zuck}

There are many responses to the gospel message.

† Scorn / denial / rejection / anger

† Passivity / apathy

† Curiosity

† Interest – Like the shepherds, “I want to know more.”

The point for believers: We are not responsible for the response of others, we are only responsible to bear witness to what we have seen and experienced.

The point for not-yet-believers: Which of these four responses would you say most closely fits you?

The gospel is SO simple and yet SO profound

It is easy to lose the wonder of the incarnation amidst all the glitter of this season...

Many people use “Xmas” rather than Christmas...

Someone has suggested that it means Xhaustion, Xcuses, Xchanges, Xcesses, Xtravagances, Xasperations, Xhibitions and worldly Xcitement. How much better to make the Lord the very center of our Christmas observance. Keep Christ in Christmas!

As there was no room for the baby Jesus in the inn, Sadly, there is, all too often, no room for Him today in our celebration of Christmas.

4. Eye Witnesses (v. 17)

The astonishment of those who heard (v. 18)

To share good news you do not have to be a gifted speaker, brilliant theologian or anointed evangelist. The only thing you really need to have is the willingness to share, and the real experience of meeting Christ...

5. Forever Changed (v. 20)

How amazed the angels must have been when they saw the Creator born as a creature, the Word coming as a speechless baby. ^{Warren Wiersbe}

Amazement sent the angels to the shepherds

Then it sent the shepherds to the Savior

Then it sent the shepherds to anyone who would listen

Then it rippled out...

Are YOU in the ripple?

A Truth to Remember: The simplicity of the Shepherds, of the newborn baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in an animals' feeding trough, points us to the glory that Christ laid aside to take upon Himself our flesh.

A Challenge to Consider: Are you, like the shepherds, excited enough about the Messiah's coming that you cannot keep silent?

One thing I heard this morning was...