

Learning from Shepherds

- Luke 2:15-20
- On the TV show, Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?, they took a poll of 8 to 12 year olds and asked them, "What do you most enjoy about the holidays?" A) Decorating the house B) Spending time with family and relatives C) Receiving presents. What do you think most of the children said? Answer: B.
- Maybe that's something we can all learn from 8-12 year olds. But what can we learn today from the shepherds?
- **First**, we can learn about listening. The shepherds did not speak until the angels had gone away into heaven. They just listened in stunned silence. They didn't interrupt the angel when he told them about the good news of great joy. They didn't ask him a question. They just listened. John Wayne used to say that most of us are short on ears and long on mouth. Stephen Covey said, "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." Oh Lord, teach us to listen when You speak to us! For that matter, teach us to listen when anybody speaks to us. We know that the listening of the shepherds was collectively effective. There was no disagreement as to what the angel had said. And the proof that they heard what the angel said was in how they responded. "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see..."
- **Second**, we can learn about encouragement. They said to one another, "Let us go and see." The shepherds encouraged one another to do the right thing. If the people you are hanging out with are not in the habit of doing the right thing, you are hanging out with the wrong people. The Bible says blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the path of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful. Instead, a man who is blessed delights in the law of the Lord and he meditates on the law of the Lord both day and night!

• **Third**, we can learn about obedience. They said, "let us **NOW** go," and then they made haste and went. They hurried to obey God and see. The story is told about a shepherd who was a youth on that first Christmas night. And now he is old and as his grandson sits on his knee he recalls that night, "A long, long time ago, when I was a little more than a boy, I was out on the Judean hills one night with some other shepherds, keeping watch over the flock. And an angel of the Lord came upon us and the glory of the Lord shone round about us. And we were very afraid. But the angel said, "fear not... for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord... you shall find the baby in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." When he had said this, the old man's lips quivered and ceased to move and there was silence. Then the grandson turned and looked with wide, puzzled eyes into his grandfathers face and said, " But, grandfather is that all? What did you do when you heard the good news? Was what the angel said really true? Was the Christ child ever really born?" The old shepherd sadly shook his white head and answered, " I never knew. I never went to see. Some say that it is all a myth. Others say they found in Him, the light of God and the power for life. But for me I could never be quite sure. Because I never did go to see."

Fourth, we can learn about faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The angel had just told them about the child who was all that mankind had **HOPED** for, but it took faith for them to go and see what had been **not seen** for 700 years since Isaiah's prophecy and now, according to the angel **could be seen**. The story has been told about a shepherd who was a young on that first Christmas night. And now he is old and as his grandson sits on his knee he remembers: "A long, long time ago, when I was a little more than a boy, I was out on the Judean hills one night with some other shepherds, keeping watch over the flock. And an angel of the Lord came upon us and the glory of the Lord shone round about us. And we were very afraid.

But the angel said, "fear not... for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord... you shall find the baby in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." When he had said this, the old man's lips quivered and ceased to move and there was silence. Then the grandson turned and looked with wide, puzzled eyes into his grandfathers face and said, " But, grandfather is that all? What did you do when you heard the good news? Was what the angel said really true? Was the Christ child ever really born?"

The old shepherd sadly shook his white head and answered, " I never knew. I never went to see. Some say that it is all a myth. Others say they found in Him, the light of God and the power for life. But for me I could never be quite sure. Because I never did go to see."

Fifth, we can learn about worship. Because after the shepherds hurried and found the manger and saw the Promised Messiah with their own eyes, their worship did what all worship is supposed to do. It became mission. ***And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child.*** Not only there, at the manger. Because it says, ***all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.*** And when they left, they returned ***glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them.*** Worship, seeing Christ, will always result in mission, telling His story, and telling YOUR story as you have heard and seen for yourself that God is good and when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"

- What can we learn from these shepherds, whom God chose to become the first evangelists? We can learn about listening. We can learn about encouragement. We can learn about obedience. And faith. And we worship.

