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Christmas According to the Shepherds; Luke 2:8-20

GPBC

12.26.21

Introduction – One of the things I’ve enjoyed at Christmas is watching Christmas movies with our children, especially in their younger years. I don’t know if it’s because I’m a pastor or not, but it always interests me and catches my ear when Hollywood tries to describe Christmas. For example, one of my all time favorite Christmas movie personalities is Clark Griswald, I guess because we have a lot in common. We both like to sing songs really loud just to the family. We both get upset with knuckleheads on the road. We both make big plans and somehow seem to mess them up. But as much as I like Clark, he really missed the message of Christmas. He says the Christmas star means something different to everyone. Well Clark that’s wrong. The Christmas star means the Savior is born.

The Grinch does a little better. He says maybe Christmas doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas perhaps means a little more. Well that’s headed in the right direction but that’s not it either.

It’s Lynus in a Charlie Brown Christmas that gets it right. When Charlie Brown yells can anybody tell me the meaning of Christmas, Lynus quotes the passage from Luke 2. I almost titled today’s message A Charlie Brown Christmas.

In recent years we’ve looked at Christmas from the perspective of Simeon and Anna and from the angel here in Luke 2. Today we look at Christmas from the perspective of the shepherds.

- I. They Were Not Looking for Christ (v8)
 - a. Somewhere on the outskirts of Bethlehem, a group of shepherds were keeping watch over their flock by night.
 - b. In other words, they were doing what shepherds do. They were about their daily business of keeping sheep. This was their vocation. This was their livelihood. They were shepherds, and they were shepherding.
 - c. Now the greatest, most magnificent, wondrous, glorious, history-changing event to have ever occurred up until that point had quietly

unfolded just down the way from where they were, and they had no idea.

- d. It was totally unknown to them that down in Bethlehem, the Son of God had come down to earth. To use the words of one of the songs we heard last week, the long-awaited Messiah had wrapped our injured flesh around Him, to breath our air and walk our sod, to rob our sin and make us holy, the perfect Son of God.
 - e. But up until v9, for these shepherds, it was just another night of watching sheep. For them, it was the same tonight as it had been every other night. Little did they know, nothing was the same tonight as it had been every other night. But for them, they were just living through another day. For God, however, He was doing something great, something secret, that would change them forever!
 - f. Here's the application for us today. In the mundane of life, in the busyness of life, in the heaviness and darkness of life, when it seems to us just to be the same old grind, remember the shepherds!
 - g. God is at work all around you every day. He's working behind the scenes. He's working quietly and secretly. But the work He is doing is monumental and life-changing and sustaining and keeping and saving. These shepherds were simply keeping sheep. God was sending His Son to save these shepherds.
 - h. At the end of every day, when it seems to us that it has been just another day, it has not been just another day. God never sleeps or slumbers. His wonders and mercies are new every day. He is doing something wonderful in the same region, all around your life and for your life!
 - i. You see, when we first see these shepherds, they were not looking for Christ. They were watching sheep.
- II. Christ Was Looking for Them
- a. The Bible says, "and an angel of the Lord appeared to them – to them!" They weren't seeking Jesus, but Jesus was seeking them. And He sent an angel their way.
 - b. All of a sudden the brilliant, breath-taking glory of God shone all around them, and they were terrified at such a sudden, sky-filled display of glory. They were speechless. Their hearts were pounding in fear. They thought surely they were going to die.

- c. But the angel not only appeared to them – the angel spoke to them. An angel of the Lord, a messenger of Jehovah, had a message for them. And what a glorious message it was.
- d. Fear not – you don't have to be afraid. I haven't been sent to judge or destroy. I've been sent to bring you good news. This isn't news of your demise; this is news of your salvation. This is good news. This is the gospel.
- e. And it's such good news that it will be great joy for all the people. What I am getting ready to tell you is going to be told over and over and over until it reaches all the people, until all the world has heard.
- f. And what is this good news? Listen to the angel proclaim the gospel to these shepherds. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
 - i. For unto you is born this day – wait a minute, that's just what Isaiah 9:6 promised – for to us a child is born
 - ii. In the city of David – wait a minute, that's just what Micah 5:2 promised – O Bethlehem, from you shall come forth the one who is to be ruler
 - iii. A Savior – wait a minute, that's just what Isaiah 53:12 promised – he bore the sins of many and makes intercession for the transgressors
 - iv. Who is Christ the Lord – wait a minute, that's just what Isaiah 7:14 promised – the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel
 - v. The promised Messiah has come – but that's just the first part of this good news.
- g. Think about these shepherds. This is Christmas according to the shepherds. These aren't kings – these are nobodies. They don't have clout or status or influence – they keep sheep. These are not the movers and shakers and influencers of Judea – these are shepherds. They reside their whole lives on the bottom rung of the social ladder. To this day – we don't even know their names.
 - i. But look what Christ did for them! V9 – an angel appeared To Them. V10 – an angel spoke To Them. V10 – I bring You good news. V11 – unto You is born this day. V12 – this will be a sign for You.

- ii. Here's the point – if Christ will open heaven to a group of nameless shepherds, He'll open heaven for you! If Christ will seek shepherds and turn them into saints, He'll do the same for you!
 - h. That's the second half of the good news – the promised Messiah has come to save sinners. Sin is not restricted to one ethnic group or to one social class. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God! That's you. That's me! Sin is the universal human condition and therefore the gospel is for all the people – rich and poor, slave and free, man and woman, Jew and Gentile, the up and coming and the down and out. That's you. That's me!
 - i. Christ has come to seek and save the lost – that's Christmas according to the shepherds!
- III. Now They Have a Story to Tell
- a. The angel told the shepherds the good news of the birth of the Savior and then the angel along with a multitude praised God.
 - b. The shepherds go and tell the good news and then they praise God. Read vv15-20.
 - c. It was told them – then they went with haste and saw it – then they told others – and then they praised God!
 - d. You see my friends, the shepherds we met in v8 are not the same shepherds we see in v20. They were just keeping sheep and now they are glorifying God. They heard something wonderful. They went and saw something wonderful. And they were never the same.
 - e. The same was true for me. Dec 27, 1987, I finally heard the gospel, not with my ears but with my heart. I finally saw Christ, not with my eyes but by faith, and now I have a story to tell.
 - f. The same is true for you who are in Christ. One day you were going about your own business and God sent the good news to you, and you saw Christ, and you've never been the same since.
 - g. Now we ought to follow these shepherds. Every day, let's tell others the good news that's been told to us and return here every Sunday to glorify and praise God!

Conclusion – Joy to the World – the Lord has come!