

T R I N I T Y
B I B L E C H U R C H
D A L L A S

The Sermon

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Luke 2:8-20

"Shepherds, Angels, & Good News"

December 31, 2023

TRANSCRIPT

Well, as always, I've got a great passage because it's from the Bible, okay, it's from God's word. And I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to Luke chapter 2, Luke chapter 2. And today we're going to be looking at verses 8 through 20, if we can squeeze that many verses in. So the good thing about the second service is there's no Sunday School afterward, so I can take whatever time I need to.

Luke chapter 2, I want to begin reading in verse 8. And the title of this message is "Shepherds, Angels, & Good News." I want to begin reading in verse 8, as we continue our study of the gospel of Luke. And if you're visiting with us today, we're thrilled you're here. And we preach our way through books in the Bible and we literally go verse by verse. And so our study now brings us to Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse 8.

"In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to

God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'

"When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.' So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them."

What a passage. What a narrative that we will be looking at today. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] God, this is Your word, and we are so eager to look into it. We love the birth of Your Son, this account, and we want to dig into the riches of this text, this passage, so that our own spiritual lives would be enriched so that we could become more like Christ and serve You more faithfully. So we ask now for Your help and assistance as we look into this passage which is intended for our good, for our edification. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses that I have just read to us, we see the first group of people to whom the birth of Christ has been made known. And it was to of all people shepherds. And we tend to have this romantic idealistic view of shepherds as being very positive. And in many ways, they are. For example, David, King David as a young boy, was a shepherd. And David wrote in Psalm 23, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want." And Jesus identified Himself in John 10, "I am the good shepherd," not once, but twice.

But that does not necessarily represent how shepherds were thought of in the first century. In fact, in the first century, they had a very tainted reputation. Shepherds were considered to be outcasts of society who, really, lived out of town, out in the fields with their sheep, and they spent so much time with their sheep, in fact, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, that they just smelled like sheep. They were at the bottom of the social order, the bottom rung of the social ladder. Shepherds were regarded as liars and thieves. In fact, they were not even allowed to bear testimony in a court of law because they are known for being so dishonest. They were a despised class. They ranked with lepers as the lowest in Israel. They were uncouth, uncultured, unclean, untaught, unread, unskilled. Like I said, they spent their time with sheep. There was very little skill involved in being a shepherd, you just needed to be able to stay awake and keep up with your flock. And yet, these are the very men to whom God chose to send His angel so that they would be the first to hear of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The angel was not sent to Jerusalem to bring the message to the scribes, to the rabbis, to the priests, to the Pharisees, to the Sadducees. No, God bypassed all of them and God sent His angel down to a group of shepherds under the cloak of darkness. It was made known to the lowest of the low, to the poor shepherds. And I think we have even in this a picture of how God chooses to operate. God chooses to bypass the upper-class, for the most part, and God delights to go all the way down to the lower-class to begin to raise up people to carry out His work. Oh, there will be some in the upper-class, but they are the exception, not the rule. You see, Christianity has always been a grassroots movement from the bottom up. It's not a trickle-down from the top of society down into the lower reaches. No, it's always been a grassroots from the bottom up.

And this should be of encouragement to us today, because you may be feeling, "Could God use me?" Well, the answer is yes. In fact, the problem may be you're over-qualified. The problem may be that you have too much gifting and not enough trusting and praying and relying like someone who is less gifted. And so, we're not surprised to see that this angel bypasses Jerusalem and comes – even bypasses Bethlehem and goes to a field about two miles outside of town to some shepherds to make known the message.

So, I want to walk through this passage with you today. I'm thrilled you're here. And everything revolves around the shepherds. So, five things I want you to note about these shepherds. Number one, in verse 8, what the shepherds were doing, what the shepherds were doing.

We read in verse 8, "In the same region there were some shepherds." I mean, these shepherds are such nobodies we don't even have any of their names. To this point in this account in Luke chapter 1 and Luke chapter 2, we're given lots of names. We're given the name Zacharias, and the Elizabeth, and the name Mary, and the name Joseph, and the name Gabriel. And now for the first time we come to a group of people and there are no names because that's just how unnoticed they were in their day.

And it's almost put in a little bit of a dismissive way, just some shepherds. "They were staying out in the fields." And they're away from town. They're really out in the middle of nowhere. They're not in a city, they're with animals. They're not surrounded with scholars in the temple. They're not with people in the synagogue. They're not in Solomon's Portico. In reality, they're out in the boondocks. They're out in nowheresville. This is their office. This is where they work, and it is to these shepherds that the good news will be made known.

It says in verse 8 that "they were keeping watch over their flocks by night." "Keeping watch" means they are guarding their flock and protecting their flock from wolves and from predatory animals and from thieves. And they're just out by themselves, but they're doing their work. They are so faithful. They are so reliable. They are so trustworthy. They're out of the public eye. They're out of the spotlight. No one is able to see them. It's even nighttime. No one can lay an eye on them. But, yet, here they are faithfully doing their job, faithfully taking care of this flock. And this is what they do day in, day out, and they are always keeping watch over their flocks at night and just faithfully doing their work.

Faithfulness to God in doing your job is never overrated. No matter how seemingly insignificant the task may be, God always takes note of faithfulness, and it is by no coincident that it is to these faithful shepherds that this angel appears. And I think a point of application for each and every one of us is that whatever God has assigned you to do, you need to be faithful whether is anyone is watching you or not. It may be you're called to care for an aging parent. It may be that you're called to work in the nursery. It may be that you're called to work in the sound booth back here or teach a class – whatever it is that God calls you to do. It may be that God has called you to take care of little children in your home and to change diapers and to feed them and wash their clothes. Whatever it is, you are to be faithful with this assignment that has been entrusted to you by God. And on the last day, you will not be measured by how successful you were, but by how faithful you were. So that's what the shepherds were doing just faithfully. They had their ore in the water and they were pulling that ore and just doing what they had been assigned to do.

But now, second, I want you to see what the shepherds saw. That's in verse 9, what the shepherds saw. And we read in verse 9, "And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them." It would be impossible for me to recreate this scene and paint it on the canvas of your mind so that we could fully grasp how dramatic this scene is. An angel of the Lord, that's a heavenly messenger who has been at the throne of God, is dispatched from heaven and wings its flight through outer space and through the atmosphere and is pinpointed now to come to this exact place, has been dispatched from the throne of heaven, and suddenly stood before the shepherds, unexpectedly and dramatically.

What an imposing appearance this was. And we read, "and the glory of the Lord shone around them." It's not the glory of the shepherds, it's the glory of the Lord shone around them." For they had been in the very presence of God in heaven, and the outshining light of God's presence is still being reflected in them and from them, just like when Moses was in the presence of God in Exodus 33 – or earlier in Exodus, and he had to cover his face with a veil because the afterglow was still on him. That's what this is with these angels. And God is without a physical body, without a physical presence. But in the Bible, we learn that the only time that there is some kind of a visual manifestation of God who is a spirit is light, bright shining

light. In fact, we read in Revelation 21 with the new heavens and the new earth, God will just snuff out the sun. The sun won't even be needed to illumine the universe because the face of God Himself will light up the galaxies.

And so, this angel has been in the presence of God, and the glory of the Lord, the bright, shining, effulgent light of God's glory now lights up this Bethlehem field like it's a football stadium and the lights are turned on, and it's almost as if it's midday as this angel comes and the glory of the Lord shone all around them, just lit up the sky that night in the horizon, "and they were terribly afraid." You would have been terribly afraid. I would have been terribly afraid. In fact, if we had been there that night we might have just fainted and gone unconscious. They were terribly afraid.

The word "frightened" comes from a Greek word *phobeo*, comes in the English language as "phobia." They are now gripped with a phobia as this angel is immediately in their presence and it's almost like the noonday sun has now appeared just in front of them. But not just frightened, they are terribly frightened. It's the Greek word *meGas*. They are mega frightened, not just a little. They are seized with fear and suffering dread as this angel appears.

I find it very significant that in the Bible the entire earthly life and ministry of Christ is attended by angels. The birth of Christ, there are four visitations of angels here in Luke 1 and Luke 2. In Luke 1:11 is the first. The angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias. And then the second visit in Luke 1:26, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name Him Jesus."

This is now the third angelic visitation at the birth of Christ in verse 9. And then in verse 13, which we'll look at in a little bit, there's an entire army of angels that appears. All of this serves to punctuate the importance of the coming of Christ into the world, that even the angels of heaven are attending this glorious event. But it will continue throughout His life at different isolated times that were of extreme importance.

For example, when Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan and the Spirit of God came down and anointed Him. After that, He went into the wilderness and was tested for forty days and forty nights. And we read in Mark 1:13 that the angels were ministering to Jesus during this time of trial and testing. And then we read later in the garden of Gethsemane at the end of His ministry in Luke 22:43, "An angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him." And then the resurrection of Christ in John 20:12, "Two angels were sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laying."

And what about the ascension of Christ? Do you remember in Acts chapter 1 and in verse 10? Jesus, He just is taken up in midair. Two angels meet Him to escort Him back to the throne of God in heaven, and the two angels turn around and looked at the disciples on the Mount of Olives and said, "You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing into the heavens? This same Jesus who was taken up from you shall return in like manner." And then Jesus just disappeared with the two angels as He reentered heaven.

What's the point? The point is that these are like bookends around the life and ministry of Christ: angels attending His birth, angels attending His temptation in the wilderness, angels attending the garden of Gethsemane, His resurrection, all the way down to His ascension. It underscores what a history-altering moment this is that this angel now appears. It underscores that something extraordinarily important has happened.

That's what the shepherds saw, and that's what the shepherds were doing. And now I want you to see what the shepherds heard. That begins in verse 10, and what they heard is the most extraordinary message that has ever been heard in the history of the world.

Verse 10, "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid.'" Why would he say that? Because they were, as we just read at the end of the previous verse, they were terribly shaken. And so the angel now seeks to calm them: "Do not be afraid." And he will now the greatest message that has ever been

heard, and this is the only message that brings peace to the heart and calmness to the soul. It is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He says in verse 10, "I bring you good news." Those four words, "I bring good news," it's just all one word in the original language, and it's the same word that is translated "gospel," just in a verb form here. And what the angel is saying, "I proclaim the gospel to you. I proclaim good news to you." That's what the word "gospel" means. It means good news. It's not just good news though, it is the greatest news that anyone will ever hear. If you are a Christian, this is the greatest news you will ever hear in your life; and if this is not the greatest news that you've ever heard, then you're not a Christian, then you're not yet converted. You do not know the Lord if this is not the greatest news that you have ever heard in your life. Nothing will ever top this. And it is this good news alone that brings great joy.

Notice what he says: "I bring you good news of great joy," that means good news that produces great joy. And this word "great," there it is again, *megas*, mega joy. "Joy" means gladness and exuberance and excitement of heart and enthusiasm. No, it is this greatest message that brings the greatest joy to anyone's life. And if you have believed and if you have received this good news, then you know exactly this great joy of which this angel speaks.

He continues in verse 10 and says, "which will be for all the people." Whoever they are, wherever they are, they have this one great need for this great news that is offered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he now begins to define this gospel. He says, "For today," I like this, "for today in the city of David there's been born for you a Savior." This very day, this very night. There's not a time gap between what we looked at last week when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger, and now this scene. There's no distance. It's all the same night. It's all the same day.

This angel says, "For today." I love the way God works, that there is an urgency, and even an emergency about getting this message out. "For today in the city of David" – that's Bethlehem, that's that tiny little hamlet – "there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Now, those

three words, "Savior, Christ, Lord," those are all titles. That's not the name of the baby. The name of the baby is Jesus. Matthew 1:21, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." And the name Jesus means Jehovah saves, that He is God in human flesh come to save sinful humanity.

These three words, "Savior, Christ, Lord," these are titles, like president, prime minister. And what do these mean? This is very important because this really is the heart of the gospel. He begins by saying, "Savior." There's a reason why this is number one, because this is why He came first and foremost. He came for many different reasons, but there's only one premier, principle, primary reason. It was to be a Savior.

Now, He also came to reveal the Father to us. He also came to be the great expositor of the law. He also came to set an example for us. He also came so that He could become a sympathetic high priest to us who has been tempted at all points such as we are, yet without sin. Those are all secondary reasons, legitimate reasons. But there's only one that rises to the head of the list on why Jesus came, and it is to be a Savior.

Now, I have said this multiple times, and I'm going to say it one more time what this means: "Savior." It means deliverer from danger and destruction. It means a rescuer from ruin. And that is why Jesus has come. He has come to deliver us from the eternal damnation that we deserve. This title "Savior" reveals the primacy of His mission, first and foremost, to deliver His people from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, from the pollution of sin, from the condemnation of the final judgment, and from the sentence of the execution from that judgment, which is to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, the place of outer darkness, that place where the worm never dies, that place known as the fiery hell. Jesus has come on the greatest of all missions. He has been dispatched from the throne of heaven to come live a sinless and perfect life to meet all the requirements of the law on our behalf, and to go to a cross, and there to be lifted up and to die in the place of all His people who would believe in Him, and there shed His blood and lay down His life a ransom for many.

That's why He came into this world. He was born to die. He was born to be the Savior of sinners. And there is no one here today who does not need a Savior from your sins because we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, have we not? We've all been weighed in the balances and found wanting. And the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death," and that's not just physical death, that's eternal death, which is the second death which is to be cast into the outer darkness of hell forever. We need to be rescued from that. And that is why Jesus came into this world.

Your greatest need is not that you're lonely. Your greatest need is not a physical ailment. Your greatest is not for companionship. Your greatest need is not for a new start at work. Your greatest need is for a Savior to rescue you from what is laying on the horizon out in front of you, the final judgment when you will stand before God. You need someone to deliver you from that sentence of eternal death. And that is what Jesus has come to do, and that is what He did.

Acts 4:12, "There's salvation in no other name; for there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." And John 4:42 says, "He's the Savior of the world." That does not mean He will save everyone in the world, but what it does mean is there is no other Savior in the world. He is the one and only Savior in the world. Jesus is the Savior. Is He your Savior?

And then the second title is "Christ" who is Christ. Christ is a title that means the Anointed One, the One who has been anointed with the person and power of the Holy Spirit of God so that He would be supernaturally enabled and empowered to carry out His mission of salvation. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit in His sinless humanity. He never gave up any of His eternal deity. He took upon Himself sinless humanity, and it was in this sinless humanity that He needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

Christ in the New Testament is the equivalent of Messiah in the Old Testament, Meshua which means the Anointed One. In the Old Testament

when kings took their office they were anointed with oil and it was to be symbolic of the Holy Spirit would now enable them to administrate the affairs of the kingdom and to be given wisdom and discernment and discretion and insight as king. And then the priest would be anointed as well, as the oil would be poured on their head, and they would be given now the ability to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus was anointed in the river Jordan, as He began inaugurated His public ministry, He would be empowered by God the Spirit to carry out His saving mission. He could not fail.

And then the word "Lord," you see that there. We cannot emphasize this enough. "Lord" means Master, Sovereign, Ruler. Matthew 28:18, the One who has all authority in heaven and earth. And further, there's a title of Deity. "Lord" means that Jesus God in human flesh. And something I noticed this morning as I woke up early and was just reviewing my notes in this passage, at the end of verse 15 we see the word "Lord" again, but here it refers to the first Person of the Trinity, God the Father. And so "Lord" in verse 15 means Deity, so as well does "Lord" mean Deity in verse 11, yet it's the two different Persons out of the three within the Trinity. In fact, the most basic confession of Christianity in the first century was Jesus is Lord, 1 Corinthians 12:3.

So, these three titles come together to tie a tight knot on who this child is. He is Savior. He is Christ. He is Lord. And so, verse 12, the angel continues, "This will be a sign for you," - and here's the sign - "you will find a baby wrapped in cloths." Now, a sign will distinguish this baby from every other baby. "So, this will be a sign for you. This is how you will know this is the Christ Child. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths." Well, that is not a distinguishing sign because every baby born would be wrapped in swaddling clothes. It would be like saying a baby will be found with a diaper on. No, that pretty much covers them all - no pun intended. I didn't mean that, it just happened.

But here's the distinguishing sign, "and lying in a manger." Nobody's going to put their baby in a feeding trough. Nobody's going to put their baby in a dug out, hollowed out hole in the ground where you would put oats or corn

or something for animals to graze in and to eat in out back behind an inn. No one does that, except this baby who has descended from the heights of heaven all the way down to the depths of this earth. It was entirely appropriate that he would be in a manger. No other baby would be in a manger.

So this would be the distinguishing sign. But now, to just add fuel to this, verse 13, "And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest.'" Again, unexpectedly, but dramatically there appeared with this one angel, there bursts onto the scene a multitude. This word "multitude" means a great vast number of the heavenly host. The word "host" means an army. There are legions and legions and legions and armies of angelic beings that now suddenly appear in the sky and surround this field outside of Bethlehem and praising God. I mean, this is like the hallelujah chorus with thousands and thousands and thousands of angels now singing and praising God.

Just remember this: they too have come straight from the throne of God and they've been with this baby who was in the fullness of God in heaven for at least the last four thousand years. These angels have been in the presence of Jesus Christ. And Christ has now left glory and entered this world through the portal of a virgin's womb. And now He is here, and these angels who have seen it all, they now burst forth in glorious praise. It says, "Praising God." All heaven breaks loose with rejoicing, and this is what they sing: "Glory to God in the highest."

The word "glory," *doxa*, comes into the English language as doxology. They're singing the doxology, "Praise be to God in the highest." And "highest" means heaven. In fact, that's the word "heaven" means. It means heights. And this is in the superlative degree: "highest." This means that God is at the very apex of the organizational chart of the entire universe. There is no one on His level, and there's no one above God. He is God in the highest. And in the Old Testament, heaven is sometimes referred to as the heights of heights, almost to double superlative it that He is so high and lifted up. He is the Most High God. That is what these angels are singing.

And then in verse 14 at the end, "and on earth" - so God in the highest of the heights, and now on earth, the lowest of the low - "peace among men with whom He is pleased." What is this peace? Well, "peace" is used in two different ways in the Bible, especially the New Testament. There is the peace of God and there is peace with God. The peace of God is what we call subjective peace, and that is the internal peace, the calmness and stillness of heart in the midst of the raging storms of life, the inner tranquility and serenity.

That's not what is being referenced here. This is peace with God. This is known as objective peace. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." What this is saying is that this Savior who is Christ the Lord has come to establish peace between two opposing parties where there's been hostility and rebellion and animosity and hatred. Jesus is our peace. And at the cross, the Bible says He propitiated the righteous anger of God. That means He fully satisfied and placated the wrath of God towards us, such that now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And the reason we know that this is peace with God, referenced here, because of what he says in the following words, "among men with whom He is pleased." God is not pleased with everyone. God is extremely displeased with every unbeliever who is outside of Christ. And every unbeliever, Romans 1:18, is under the wrath of God, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." God is angry with the wicked every day, Psalm 7, Psalm 9, Psalm 11 says, that in the mission of Christ, He has come to reconcile, to be the peacemaker between Holy God and sinful man through the blood of His cross.

No, this is the good news. This is the greatest news. You will never hear anything any better than this, not because I'm preaching it. Others can preach the gospel better than I, but no one can preach a better gospel than I. This is the one and only gospel, and this should be music in your ears

today. There should be leaping in your chest by your heart that you can be made right with God through this Savior.

Martin Luther who was the great German Reformer, he translated the German Bible, the New Testament into German in 1522, and he came to this word "gospel." "How do I translate good news? How do I translate gospel into the German language so that the people can understand?" So he translated it, but he made a few footnotes just so people could understand.

"Evangel," that's the Greek word. "Gospel is a Greek word that means" – this is Luther – "a good message, good tidings, good news, a good report which one sings and tells with rejoicing. So when David," Luther writes, "overcame the huge Goliath, the good report and the comforting news came among the Jewish people that their terrible enemy had been slain, that they had been delivered, and that joy and peace had been given to them, and they sang, and they danced, and they were happy because of this. So," Luther writes, "the evangel, the gospel of God, is also a good message and report. The gospel has resounded in all the world, proclaimed by the apostles. It tells of a greater David who fought with sin and death and the devil and overcame them, and thereby delivered without any merit of their own all those who were held captive in sin, who were plagued by death, and who were overcome by the devil. He made them righteous, He gave them life, and He saved them."

If that doesn't put joy into your heart, if that doesn't send excitement through your blood vessels, then you're spiritually dead and need life. It's the greatest news that's ever been proclaimed in the history of this entire world. And that is what this angel, and now these angels, have come to proclaim. It's what the shepherds heard, what they saw, what they were doing.

Now, verse 15, what the shepherds did. I mean, you can't sit still after this, can you? I mean, you can't just yawn and go back to bed. I mean, you've got to do something with this. And so, in verse 15, "When the angels had gone away from them into heaven," think about this. They'd been by themselves

out in this field. Suddenly it's armies and armies of angelic beings. It's lit up like noonday sun, and then suddenly they just all fly back to heaven, and now they're by themselves again with a bunch of smelly sheep.

"The shepherds began saying to one another," – they immediately began to say to one another, and they were all saying the very same thing – 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem.'" In other words, "We're not going to veer to the right, we're not going to veer to the left, we're not going to go backwards, we're not going to stay still. We can only go straight forward. Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."

You see, the angels, and this angel, first angel, they're just a mouthpiece for God, for the Lord, "which the Lord has made known to us." And that's what's happening right now. I'm just a mouthpiece. I'm just a middle man, okay? It is the Lord right now who is speaking to you through His written word of a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

Verse 16, "So they came in a hurry." It's a little less than two miles away from this field into Bethlehem. And, no doubt, they probably jogged as fast as they could to get into Bethlehem. And it says, "They found their way to Mary and Joseph." They don't know where Mary and Joseph are. This clearly implies they had to search. They had to look. They had to comb this entire small town and to go to every inn and to go to every structure and building where there would be some animals gathered around it. And they're looking and looking and looking. They will not be denied until they've finally found Mary and Joseph and the baby, "as He lay in the manger," just like the angel said.

There He is. This is what they did. And they set an example for us. They set an example of living your life with a sense of urgency, with a sense of the immediacy of the moment. The flesh is always a procrastinator. The flesh is always putting things off. The flesh is always dragging its feet. It's always late to do what God would have us to do. But it matters to God not only what you do, but when you do it. The Bible says, "Boast not yourself of tomorrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth." Tomorrow is the

devil's day, today is God's day. "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation."

No, these shepherds are pacesetters for us. They weren't shuffling their feet. In fact, they didn't even say, "Well, let's pray about it. What should we do?" That's just filibustering God. They knew exactly what they must do, and they did it.

Do you know what you need to be doing in this upcoming year? Do you know how you will serve the Lord? Will it start before April? Will it start before May? Or will you just want to pray about some more as you see needs all around you?

Well, finally, in verse 17, what the shepherds said. How could they be silent? So, verse 17, "When they had seen this," – when they saw the baby exactly as the angel said, wrapped in cloths, laying in a manger, in a feeding trough – "they made known the statement which had been told them about this child." They just began to say, "This baby right here, this is the Savior of the world. This is the Christ. This is God in human flesh. This is the Lord." They began to make the statement that had been told them known to those who were there.

You know, I think too often we're just way too silent when we ought to be witnessing. It's been said too many Christians are like an Artic river, frozen at the mouth. I mean, we need to be like these shepherds and talking it up and telling people what has been made known to us.

Verse 18, "And all who heard it wondered." Now, this word "all" really intrigues me. "And all who heard it wondered." "All" has to refer to more than Joseph and Mary. "All" gives a fullness of a larger group. And so what's taking place here, this indicates just how crowded these conditions were where Joseph and Mary were.

Remember, there's no room left in the inn. And I doubt seriously that Joseph and Mary were the only ones who couldn't find room in the inn, and they're all put out in the back where the animals are feeding and eating. But there would be others out there with them, and they're – perhaps, they're just all in one big stall. It could be they're just in one larger area.

Well, this didn't silence the shepherds. They said this so loud, so straightforward, so strongly, that verse 18 says that, "All who heard it wondered." That means they were amazed. They were astonished. They marveled, "Could this be so, this little baby is the Savior of the world? This is the long-awaited Messiah, the son of Abraham, the son of David?"

"They wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds." There's that word "shepherds" again. They're really the first evangelists of this new era. Again, it's not the religious establishment in Jerusalem spreading the good news. No, it's these shepherds. And you know what this tells me? You really don't have to go have a class on evangelism to know how to share the gospel. If you're saved, you know enough to tell somebody else. And if you don't know what to tell someone else, I think that calls into question whether you know the Lord or not. You have to know something to be saved, don't you? I mean, you have to know, "I'm a great sinner, He's a great Savior, and I must repent and believe in Him." Well, you just shared the gospel. And if you don't even know that, I think maybe you've fooled yourself.

No, these shepherds haven't gone and had a class in Jerusalem. No, they're just immediately witnessing for the Lord. And this really reminds me of how the best witnesses in Dallas, Texas are the newest Christians, because they're just so excited about their new faith, and they just don't know any better but to tell everybody about Jesus. And some of us who have known the Lord for years, decades, I wonder if we've kind of gotten over it. I wonder if the good news has become old news. I wonder if it's become rather stale. I wonder if we have left our first love, Revelation 2:4.

And so, these shepherds, we all want to be like these shepherds. Whether you've been a Christian for five days or for five decades, you want to be like these shepherds and immediately begin to tell others what you've seen and heard.

Well, verse 19, Mary, she was there. She heard these shepherds, and these shepherds ministered to Mary. "Mary treasured all these things." She prized this message. Her heart was like a treasure chest for these golden nuggets of truth that are now deposited in her heart and in her mind. And it says, "pondering them in her heart." That means reflecting upon them and reviewing them and musing over them.

Don't you find yourself doing that throughout the day. You're driving a car, as you're cleaning the house, your mind just keeps going back to the truth of the gospel and the truth of Jesus Christ and certain verses and certain things that you've read concerning Christ, and it just keeps recirculating in your mind, and with every loop it just renews you and strengthens you even more. That's what Mary's doing here, "pondering them in her heart." And the more she ponders, the stronger she is becoming.

Verse 20, "The shepherds went back." These faithful men, they didn't say, "Well, you know, we've been up all night. I'm going to take tomorrow off. I'm going to call in sick." No, they've got a job to do. If they don't take care of these sheep, nobody's going to take care of these sheep. And so there is the intermingling here of the spiritual and the routine.

"And the shepherds went back," - but they went back it says - "glorifying and praising God." By the way, the word "praising" means to brag on God, to boast on God. A stream of praise is just flowing from their mouth. What's down in the heart comes out of the mouth for all that they had heard and seen - what they had heard from the angel, what they had seen in the manger, "just as it had been told them."

Beloved, this is the greatest news any of us will ever hear. There are other passages in the Bible that speak of this as well. I'm not saying this is the greatest verse in the entire Bible. Who is to say what that is? But this is the greatest truth in the entire Bible. It's all about Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible's been called a Him book, it's all about Him, Jesus Christ. I knew you'd get it.

And I'm sure I'm speaking to some today that you've heard this many times. How many Christmas sermons have you heard in your life? For some here today, the scales have never really fallen off your eyes. The veil has never been pulled back, and you've never really seen that this is for you, that Christ has come into the world to save sinners just like you, and that you must have a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. You must meet the risen Christ, and you must turn away from your own sinful past and your own sinful life, and you must by faith believe in Jesus Christ.

For some here today, you've just never seen it that it's for you. You've seen it for your parents. You've seen it for your friends. You've seen it for others. But has it ever become personal for you, individual for you? Let me pose the question this way: Did Christ come for you as if there is no one else on the planet who has ever lived? Did He leave heaven? Was He born of a virgin? Did He live a sinless life? Did He die upon a cross? Was He raised from the dead for you personally and individually?

I pray that today for some of you, that for the very first time you would be awakened out of your slumber; that you would have no peace in your heart until you find peace with God; that you would no longer just be in church, but that you would be in Christ; that you no longer would simply know the preacher, but that you would know Christ; that your name would no longer just be written on the church roll, but that it would be written in the Lamb's book of life. It's got to be personal for you. And on the last day when you stand before the Lord, it will be personal. There will be no one to your left or to your right, it will be one on one, and you will be asked some very probing questions: Have you ever believed the gospel?

If you've never believed the gospel, I wouldn't leave this house of worship today without Christ. I wouldn't go five seconds without Christ. The risk/reward is too great. I would want to know that Christ is in my heart today. You need to be like Mary and treasure Christ in your heart. So if you've never done this, I extend the invitation to your heart this moment, today. You'll never be able to say to the Lord on the last day, "I didn't know," or, "I was never asked," or, "I was never invited. No, He'll point you back to today and say, "You were there, you heard, you knew, and yet you chose to just get up and walk out." So if you've never come to Christ by faith, do so this moment, today. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, thank You for sending Your Son into this world to die for our sins upon the cross. We have no other hope. We have no other Savior. We have no other means of forgiveness of our sins. We have no other way to find peace with You, except through this gospel that this angel proclaimed. Lord, may You give all here today ears to hear and a heart to believe. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The closing benediction: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

God bless you.