

“A Shepherd Looks at Christ’s Birth” (Luke 2)

December 24, 2011

Kirk Sundahl

Order of Worship for December 24th, Christmas Eve

Prelude: by Heidi Lundberg

Welcome and Opening Prayer (Kirk Lundberg unless he asks someone else!)

Opening Hymn: “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” Song # 272
(I suggest that we ask Eric Lundberg to lead the singing: so remind me!)

Scripture Reading: (Kirk Sundahl may have a preferred selection. If not, let it be Luke 2:8-20)

Hymn: “The First Noel” Song # 265

Scripture Reading: Psalm 23

Special Music: (I believe this will be a song by Mike Kokoletzos)

Message: “A Shepherd Looks at Christ’s Birth” by Kirk Sundahl
(You will want to check this out with Kirk!)

Singing of Silent Night, Holy Night while the light is passed around the room from candle to candle.
(Be sure the candles are ready on the lectern at the entrance of the church along with the programs.)

Closing Prayer

I am a shepherd like my father and his father before him. I think it is an honorable profession, but some don’t. Some people think of us as unreliable, thieves. Did you know that you could commit a crime right in front of me and I couldn’t even testify in a court of law against you? I do not know why shepherds are so looked down on. It hurts my ears thinking of the things they call us, especially when they come down to buy a lamb for a typical sacrifice. But, everybody has got to make a living, you know.

You know, King David was a shepherd; he was considered the shepherd’s king. Hmm. That makes me think of a time back when I was little. It was a time when, oh, the Romans were taking over. There was turmoil, soldiers up and down the roads. They were confiscating things from us.

Let me see, when was that? Oh, Caesar Augustus said the whole world should be registered. That was the first time as I remember right after Quirinius became governor of Syria. So everybody went to their own town, where their family came from, and had to register. So, you know, our family, good loyal subjects, we ran right into Bethlehem and signed up. But some people waited until the last day to do it. By then Bethlehem was packed. People were everywhere. My sister was making bank letting people stay at her house. It was unbelievable. There were parties, music, people catching up with old friends and family they hadn’t seen for years. One guy I heard say, “It took an act of Caesar to get my family together!”

I thought it was pretty scary in town. I was happy to be out with the sheep most of the time with all those people. There was one night that was different than most. Since we’re out with the sheep all the time, we know the night sky. This one night was different. It was bright enough that the sheep were still grazing longer than they should have been bedded down by then. So we were up later and we were getting pretty tired and dad built a fire and started making some tea. We could still see the sheep.

All of a sudden there was a man who appeared and said, “Don’t be afraid!” I was so startled! My grandpa fell down. I can’t explain the man’s presence. He made me want to crawl under a rock, but there was a calm radiance about him. It was really unusual. He said, “I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people, for today in the City of David there has been born to you a savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in clothes lying in a manger.” Then thousands of others appeared saying “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth among men with whom He is pleased.” Wow! That was just un... You would have had to have been there.

When they left Dad says, “Let’s run into town and see the baby.” Grandpa said he had just been in the presence of God’s messenger and he couldn’t believe he was still alive and he would watch the sheep and catch his breath. I don’t know what that was all about. So Dad and I ran into town as fast as we could. Man was I glad it was in a stable just like the angel said. There was straw for his bed in the feed trough. In the barn it was like clean dirt instead of the dirty dirt you would have in an inn with all people laying around, and smoke and their stuff and they’re sleeping all over the floors. I didn’t even have to take my sandals off to go inside. That was pretty cool.

We met Mary and Joseph and Jesus the baby. We were so excited: Everything the angel had said. Joseph asked us questions, but Mary just sat there taking everything in, looking with wonder at Jesus and think on what was said. We stayed for quite a while just marveling at what it must mean. The angel said God sent a Savior. This little tine child looked more like a new born than a Savior.

When we left later that morning we couldn’t help but talk about it with everyone. One man said the soldiers had taken the food from the storehouse, the government is going to tax us after they count us: we need a savior that can do something now, not a baby. Some were excited; some figured we were lying; some were just too busy and they ignored us; but most of them didn’t even know that a baby had been born that night.

So how about you? In the turmoil of life, the bright lights and the noise of the season with stuff to do are you going to miss Jesus, the Savior God sent? Or maybe like the man that is looking for somebody to do something right now, are you looking for a different savior than God sent? Some of us are looking for a Savior to take our problems from us instead of One to go with us through our problems, helping us to learn to be fit for heaven.

Are you excited that because of Jesus, the Savior that God provided, we will one day be able to be in the presence of God, God the Father, the God the Creator, and the One that’s the most scary is God the Consuming Fire? So what I want to ask you to do is as you celebrate Christmas, however your family does it, that you will take time out of your busy schedule to ponder which Christ you’re looking for. Those people weren’t going through much different than what [we] are going through, maybe even less stress than what we are going through, or some through more stress than us. But as we walk with God, the longer we walk, we realize that it is not about the here and now. I know that there are parts of the walk that are the here and now. But it is about the finish. I mean, seventy or eighty years if you are strong, and then eternity begins. So ponder that some this season.

Let’s pray: Father, our minds cannot even comprehend a glimpse of You. Yet Your Word shows us little snippets that we think are monumental things, and yet they are just the points of the rays from the sun. Give us wisdom in walking our life and wisdom of how to deal with the gift that you gave us, the One and only Son that was born, walked on earth, was crucified and rose again that we may have eternal life with You. Thank You, Father, in Christ’s name. Amen.