

**Christmas Stories: Shepherds**  
**12/12/21 Sermon Notes**

Good morning! It is great to be with you today. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Matt. I am the director of youth and outreach here at Eagle Ridge and today I have the honor of sharing a Christmas story! If you're new to Eagle Ridge, we've been going through the Christmas story from several different perspectives; first from Elizabeth, then from Mary and Joseph, and this time we're going to be looking at things from the perspective of the shepherds in the field. Now, most of us are very familiar with the Christmas story itself, so the story itself isn't necessarily new... but what can be new is seeing things from a different point of view AND also what these things mean for you and I as we try to live out our lives as followers of Christ. So, let's get into the Scripture. This is from Luke, chapter 2:

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, <sup>10</sup> but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. <sup>11</sup> The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! <sup>12</sup> And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in highest heaven,

and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, <sup>19</sup> but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Luke 2: 8-20 NLT

### Shepherd Video

I love these videos... they really help me see and feel an interpretation of what these historical figures might have been going through.... With a bit of a modern flair, of course 😊

So, let’s talk about these shepherds... who were these guys?

## Shepherds

Well, they were normal, working-class people... they had a job that not too many people wanted... they basically lived out in the fields with the sheep... and fought off wolves and other threats to their flock. Tough, rugged, sometimes a little weird, but hard working. Nowadays these might be our housekeeping staff, trash collectors, plumbers, retail workers... people that work their butts off... for not a lot of recognition... but are essential to our way of life.

They also were likely uneducated – and during this time period that meant they probably didn't know a lot of scripture. (Weren't Bible-buffs). In fact, because they spent most of their time out in the fields with the sheep... they really weren't going to temple often and practicing many of the other religious customs – or even hearing a lot of teaching or sermons. So, imagine someone from today... who grew up learning some stuff about God from their family... but then kinda drifted off and got busy with work and family stuff... and doesn't really go to church – except for important holidays, of course! – and if anyone asked them anything about their faith they'd probably just say "I dunno."

And finally, I would say they had some "Unique" social skills. They could relate and talk all day to other shepherds... but around other folk.. well, that was just a bit awkward. They just didn't have a lot in common with other people and since most of their time was sheep... you can imagine what they

wanted to talk about! Most people would look right past them, as if they didn't exist... and frankly, preferred it that way. It wasn't nice having a shepherd around... They weren't the kind of person you wanted to have a conversation with...

So, these normal, working class, non-bible-buff guys with some strange social skills were the ones that God decided to share the good news with first?!? Not only that... but sent them to go see Jesus right away in the manger, making them the first non-family members to meet the son of God, AND then the angels told them to go tell others about what they had seen?! WHY??? Why not priests? Why not kings? Why not members of the pharisees?

Because God chose them! God chooses who he wants to choose... and he chose them! And, he chooses us! His power is magnified through weakness and humility.

[2Co 12:9-10 NLT] 9 Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Now, let's chat for a minute on what it's like to be chosen....

Have you ever had a “Come to Jesus” moment? Because these guys LITERALLY had a “Come to Jesus moment” right here in this scripture. Typically when we say that we (or someone else) has had a “come to Jesus moment” it’s because something crazy or scary happened in our life... which made us reevaluate the way we do things and make some changes... particularly in terms of following Jesus. Sometimes others feel that WE need a “come to Jesus” moment and feel the need to make sure we have one... MY come to Jesus moment....

Well, let’s look again at how this moment started for these guys:

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, <sup>10</sup> but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said.

Now, most of us normal, working-class, non-bible-buff, socially awkward people (wink wink) probably think of the following image when we read this verse:

Nice Angel Image

And that's because that's what we were taught growing up. Angels were beautiful people with wings that flew around, maybe with a harp, singing about God. Aww... isn't she pretty....?

Well, that's not how angels are described in the Bible... If you took all the descriptions of angels in the Bible and tried to imagine or draw it out... it would look something like this:

### Correct Angel Images (2)

And there are even other descriptions that are almost too difficult to put into artwork... of these ring-like floating things with eyes all over them.

So, if one of these "Suddenly" appeared among you while you were hanging out on the job with your buddies... would you be afraid? I would! Makes a little more sense why every time an angel shows up one of the first things they need to tell people is "Don't be afraid" ... AND THEN.... A whole lot more show up...

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in highest heaven,

and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

Just being transparent with you all... if this happens to me... I'm pretty sure I'm about to die... Just saying...

And then the angels give their instructions and go away. And this is exactly what a "Come to Jesus" moment is like... Extreme fear followed by... a choice...

See, these shepherds had a choice to make... they were on the job... they had work to do... they couldn't just leave their sheep and go... could they? I mean, they had responsibilities... maybe it could just wait until tomorrow?... I like how the video we watched portrayed that moment... "and then one of us, I think it was Steve, said "Hey, we should go!" and we were like, oh, yeah, okay!"

When you have one of these moments... YOU need to make a decision. You're confronted with an absolute truth... you need to change. You need to do something. You need to "fill in the blank"... but at the end of the day... YOU have to be the one to do it...

The angels didn't pick up the shepherds and drop them off at the manger. They didn't threaten them with violence if they didn't do it. They didn't force or coerce them in any way... they just told them: This is the way it is... and this is what you need to do! And then left.

So, just in case you haven't had a come to Jesus moment recently... allow me to help you with that...

HEY YOU!! Normal, hard-working, non-Bible-buff people! Yeah, YOU! People who feel much more comfortable talking with people that are like you and feel awkward talking to others outside your "circle." Yeah, YOU! Who is isn't anyone special... not a king, not rich, not a priest.. just YOU! God chose YOU!

He came down to earth told you how it is and what to do, and now YOU need to make a choice. He said:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

That means YOU!! .... and ME... but.... No one is going to force us.. or coerce us.. or pick us up and drop us off at our neighbor's porch.... We are allowed to say no... of course, there are consequences for that too...

So... allow me to be "Steve" in this moment and say... "Hey... guys... maybe we should go..."

And that doesn't necessarily mean we have to leave our jobs, but it might—the shepherds did end up going back to their sheep. That doesn't necessarily mean we have to leave our country and become missionaries...but it might... the shepherds didn't... They were told the same thing as us... and here's what they did about it:

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished ... ..<sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

When we talk about being an ambassador of God, that's all that is required. Sharing the good news with others. Telling other people about Jesus and helping them connect with Him. God has already placed you exactly where he wants you... all we need to do is obey.

So, when we (as believers) talk about a "come to Jesus" moment.. what we are really talking about is a wake-up call. Realizing that we are doing the things that God wants us to do and making a change. Coming BACK to Jesus. We call this Repenting... Pastor Bill like to describe this as an "about-face" – literally turning in the opposite direction. The first step is having the

moment and realizing there is something that needs to be done... then next step is making the decision to do something about it.

So... **What would the shepherds do?**

Well, first they would **KNOW that they chosen by God for a purpose.**

Despite their flaws, their inexperience, their weakness, social awkwardness and even their smell (P-U!)... God chose them – and he chose us!

And then, they would **live out that purpose.** They would remember what is most important – and it isn't their job... or their own comfort – it's sharing the good news with others because everyone who hears this good news has their life transformed.