

ADVENT: WEEK THREE

day 18

*Good News Of Great Joy*

Luke 2:8-20



There are so many beautiful aspects of this small scene from the Christmas story, but I want to focus on the angel's opening words: "Don't be afraid. For I have come to bring you good news, the most joyous news the world has ever heard!" Right here, we learn that fear kills joy. If the shepherds had chosen fear, they would have missed the coming of this source of incredible joy. Our earthly fear is never Kingdom-minded, which is why it always causes us to miss out on joy. Joy is rooted in God's love and promise. Take a minute to picture this scene. The shepherds are out on what was a normal night. Their lives were filled with a sad irony, as they were the caregivers to the animals that would be sacrificed to atone for the sins of the people, yet as a result of handling these animals, they themselves were ceremonially unclean. This cost them their place in society as they were seen as untrustworthy or irreligious. Even so, a good shepherd needed to be willing to lay down his life for his sheep—for animals prone to wandering and getting into trouble. And on this normal night when some were probably trying to keep awake, others may have been mulling over financial problems, and still others might have been feeling like their lives were pointless, not going anywhere...on this night, Heaven literally breaks through. The angels show up on the scene singing for joy that the Savior has been born, to lay down His life for His own sheep—prone to wandering and getting into trouble. I love this quote by Carol McLeod: "Joy is the atmosphere of heaven. It is the air God the Father Himself breathes in every day of eternity. And because joy is heaven's delivered gift to me while I walk on planet earth, it is my delight and strength to experience the blessedness that God on His Throne enjoys." The angels invite these humble shepherds into this atmosphere of heaven, which is marked by the absence of fear. I also love the last verse of this passage: "The shepherds returned to their flock, ecstatic over what had happened. They praised God and glorified him for all they had heard and seen for themselves, just like the angel had said." These men return to their work changed by their God encounter now in a state of joy, literally rejoicing in the love of the Father.

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prayer:



***Lord, thank you for giving us examples of the atmosphere of Heaven invading earth. Thank You that we get to experience that atmosphere of joy this very Christmas as we renew our commitment to live close to You and fix our minds on the amazing gift of Jesus. Help us conquer the fear in lives through purposeful awe and reverence directed towards You and Your great love for us. Thank You for Your faithfulness! In Jesus' name, Amen.***

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