

**Luke 2:8-20**

<sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>15</sup> When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup> And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Shepherd said, "Good News, no...not just Good News...it's the BEST NEWS EVER!" And it is... What's the BEST NEWS ever? That we can be saved from our sins! The Angel told Joseph, "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, **for he will save his people from their sins.**" Did you hear that? **For He Will Save His People from Their Sins!** THAT is the BEST NEWS a sin-sick, human being could EVER hear...and that's what the angel told the shepherd...

**Luke 2:11**

<sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

A SAVIOR...we need someone to save us! Because we cannot come to God in our sin. God is holy, righteous, good...in every way and we're not. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"...and because of that, we are doomed to a devil's hell if we do not repent of those sins and call on the name of the Savior...Jesus. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) will be saved! INDEED...that is the BEST news EVER!

Listen carefully, Jesus Christ is our only hope. Jesus Christ is YOUR **only hope**. There is no way out of this mess we find ourselves in on this sin-sick earth. We are sinners and we are absolutely incapable of making our way to God. We are doomed, without hope, without any resources on our own to get to God, to escape our sin. But, thanks be to God, the angel told the shepherd-see it again:

**Luke 2:11**

<sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Unto **YOU**...unto **me**! We have hope! We have a way out... We have a Savior...the God/Man extending His hand to you...we have hope! Oh, what Good News! The BEST NEWS EVER! Listen, when Jesus came to this earth...everything changed! Jesus' arrival to earth by way of a manger in Bethlehem changed the course of the universe. How? Because Jesus would go from being a baby to the man on the cross...



That is the greatest moment in human history! That's ...a human being and God dying for you and for me! That's Jesus taking the judgment for your sin, my sin...that was ALL ours to bear, but instead, He bore it. Sin...the one who knew no sin came to save us from our sins. That's what the angel Gabriel told Joseph...remember from last week...

**Matthew 1:21**

**<sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."**

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Oh Christian, when Jesus died on the cross, He would bear sin so perfectly that there would NEVER have to be another sacrifice! And here's that BEST NEWS ever...because Jesus paid our sin-debt, God would be free to forgive us and take us to heaven.

Listen this morning, if you're born again, you should be so grateful for what you've just heard that it makes you feel better than if somebody just gave you \$1 billion dollars...because that billion dollars won't do you a bit of good in heaven (or in hell for the lost person)! **Listen!** the fact that Jesus punched your ticket to heaven so that you could be with Him forever...if that fact doesn't move you in some way...warming your heart in such gratitude that your eyes well up with tears, then perhaps is no longer Good News...it's just old news.

Sometimes I wonder if we've gotten so used to the coming of Jesus at Christmas that it's grown cold and lifeless...that being given a \$100 gift certificate to a steak restaurant would bring a bigger smile on our faces. Oh, the Good News...The BEST NEWS EVER, let's see if we can see this Good News in fresh way...

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We've been in on a journey... a journey we've called: "Here Comes Heaven..."



The journey to see how Jesus came to this earth to save us... We've seen how Mary said, "Yes," and how Joseph came to understand that with God's help he could say, "I'm Enough." We've seen two, poor peasants from Nazareth end up in a town called Bethlehem, because Rome wants more tax money and they've issued a census. Problem is...there's no room in the Inn. So, Joseph and Mary end up in the back-parking-lot... Kind of like this today...



You know that area behind the strip mall where the dumpsters sit. You see, that's what it would have been like...that stable-cave in Bethlehem was not some nice sanitary place...no...it was where all the donkeys and the sheep of the folks inside the Inn were kept during their stay. It would have been much like this:



A stable, cave that stunk... Think about it...Jesus was born, not in a palace...not in rich family's home...but in a roadside, stable, cave outside of an Inn ... What a place for the Savior of the



World, the Creator of the universe to be born. Folks, that's about as low as you can go. Think about it...Joseph and Mary...



were poor, common, people...and to the outside world, someone might hear a baby crying from that area behind the inn and they would think... "Oh, that poor, pitiful baby... just another baby being born to some poor people...a couple of nobodies." It's true, no one would have given a second-thought about a baby being born there, other than to feel sorry for it. That is until an angel showed up to a group of "Nobodies:" Shepherds, out in a field, not very far away. Try to imagine that with me...

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You are minding your own business...tending your sheep like any other night and BANG... something happens that's never happened before in your life...an angel shows up! Can you imagine the absolute shock and bewilderment...



Now think about this with me... The angel (whom I believe is Gabriel...the same angel who had made the announcement to Mary and Joseph) shows up to announce the birth of Jesus...the Savior of the world to shepherds! Really? Shepherds???

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Folks, let me tell you a few things about shepherds in the first century. They were nobodies! They were considered the low of the low. You see, you didn't have to have any special education or credentials to be a shepherd. In fact, a lot of times, the father's sent the runt of the family to tend the sheep. Think of Jesse and David. David wasn't even in the picture when Samuel showed up looking for a King. David was out in the fields with the sheep, because he was the youngest.

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Did you know: Shepherds in the first century were not even allowed to give testimony in a court of Law? They were seen as unreliable and frankly, too dumb. The angel came to a group of nobodies...but, I believe these nobodies believed in God and were looking for the Messiah. Look at Luke 2, verse 15:

**Luke 2:15**

<sup>15</sup>When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

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"...which the Lord has made known to us..." that's the key phrase...the shepherds said, "Lord." They knew God. They called Him, "Lord." It's true, these men might have been uneducated and unskilled...but, they were looking for the Messiah and they believed in God. You know where my mind went as I thought about those poor shepherds? I thought of Isaiah 61.

Dr. Luke records the prophecy of Isaiah, which was a prophecy about Jesus. You will remember when Jesus came to Nazareth, just after He started His ministry, He went to the synagogue...



and it was there that He read from Isaiah 61...a prophecy about Him that was made over 700 years earlier:

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**Luke 4:16-19**

<sup>16</sup>And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup>And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, <sup>18</sup>"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

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"Good News to the Poor..." those shepherds were poor and for that matter so were Joseph and Mary, and what is more...they were all outcasts in some way. Unacceptable to society...and that's who Jesus attracted the most. After all, He chose fishermen for Apostles...



no...he didn't call the rich Pharisees and Sadducees...no Rabbi would have ever chosen fishermen. But, Jesus did... He also chose a tax collector, Matthew. Jesus came to the low of the low...He talked to prostitutes and drunkards and sinners of all kinds...



And He stretched out His hand to those who would receive Him. And that is Good News my dear friends. The Good News that whoever calls on His name and surrenders their lives to Him can be saved... EVERYONE who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!

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No question about it...shepherds... were some of the lowest people on the social ladder of that day... Did you know they could not even go to the Temple? Because they would violate the Sabbath Day's walk to do so. It was too far. See the map...





It was six miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. See Bethlehem in **RED**. Six miles would have been a tremendous violation of a Sabbath Day's journey...which was 2,000 cubits or less than ½ mile. So, they couldn't even worship in the Temple. But, get this...since they were so close to Jerusalem, according to the Mishnah, the handbook of the Rabbis, these shepherds would have been required to give up some of their sheep to the Levites who worked in the Temple, if they needed more sheep to be able to sell during Passover.

You see, during the Passover season in Jerusalem, according to the Jewish historian, Josephus, there could have been as many as 200,000 lambs needed for the sacrifices. Many people traveled to Jerusalem from long distances and found it hard bringing sheep those distances, so they bought them at the Temple. Imagine that...could it have been that some of these shepherds, whom the angel appeared, could it be that they might have given sheep to be offered as Passover Lambs...and now they were hearing that THE LAMB of God was here. The Messiah...

What did they do after they heard the angel? They went to find the baby. What were they looking for

**Luke 2:16**

**16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.**

A manger...a feeding trough...that's so strange. No one put babies in mangers. But, that's what they were told. So off they went, and **I believe the first person they would have asked about a baby in a manger was the innkeeper,** because all of the news of the town would be known there...and wouldn't you know it...And so the angels found Jesus...



You know I told you last week...I believe this is why Jesus wasn't born in a room in the inn...Shepherds were coming... And they came and they saw a couple that looked like them...poor...and they saw a baby that could have been born to them for this was a place of poverty of which they knew well. They knew what it was like to live a life of humble circumstances and that's the beauty of how Jesus came...humble...poor...no nice car seat for Jesus...no...an animal feeding trough, that would be it...

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So what did the shepherds do after they had worshipped the Lord Jesus? They left. They went and did what we're supposed to do EVEN today...go tell people about Him!

**Luke 2:17-18**

**17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

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Sure, the people whom the shepherds told "wondered," they were amazed, puzzled...this made no sense...the Messiah, the long-awaited Messiah, born in a stable, in a cave...lying in a feeding trough? Made no sense... Well, none of this had made any sense. It certainly hadn't to Mary, who had to say: Yes...to Joseph, who had to say, "With you Lord, I'm enough" and now to these shepherds...and to the people they told... Everyone was bewildered. Oh, Church family, listen, God seldom makes sense, He seldom makes sense according to human wisdom... He works in mysterious and unexpected ways... Get used to that...

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Indeed, "...all who heard it wondered..." Sure they did...after all, these were shepherds telling them all of this about angels and baby's in feeding troughs...I mean...I might would have had a hard time believing them too...after all who is going to believe shepherds...after all, a judge wouldn't...but, that's the point...it doesn't matter if people will believe us or not...what matters is that we go tell people about Jesus...no matter what they say or think about us! GO!! Tell people! Are you? Are you telling anyone about Jesus? Jesus said, "GO and make disciples of all nations." That is a command! And so, the shepherds left and they got rich, right?



Nope...they went back to their fields...back to the sheep, back to work, back to the mundane...and you know what...that's okay...that's what we're called to do too...that's what we'll all do tomorrow...get back at it...but did you notice how they went?

**Luke 2:20**

**20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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We want to do that now...just like the shepherds did... **stand with me**...we're going to sing...I want you to see the words on the screens and I want you to think about them and sing them as best you can...with joy in your heart...sing them to Jesus... Worship the Light of the World...He's here!

Behold your King...Behold Messiah...Emmanuel! Let's pray...