



An **EMOTIONAL**
Christmas



A Lonely
CHRISTMAS

Week 2
Devotional №1

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. – Luke 2:8

What would it have been like to be one of the shepherds in Luke 2? Imagine yourself in the fields watching over the sheep at night. What does it look like? What does it smell like? What are you focused on?

As we talk about the shepherds in Luke 2, we must remember that they were not considered success stories in their day. They were looked down on more than they were looked up to. They were watching over many sheep that were going to be used as sacrifices in nearby Jerusalem. We are never told how many shepherds there are, but it was probably just a few (3-4). I (Jeff) had the amazing opportunity to go to Israel and visit the fields that they believe the shepherds could have been in when the angel (and then a great company of angels) came and delivered the amazing news about Jesus to them. We sang “Angels We Have Heard on High” as we were there. Thinking about how they might have felt when that message was delivered is overwhelming.

It was dark, probably chilly, and they were to stay awake in the prime sleeping hours. The shepherds are working while most people are asleep, with God’s natural eye mask of the night helping them as they have visions of sugarplums dancing in their heads. Maybe they were feeling unworthy and lonely at this time in their lives.

Have you ever felt unworthy? Lonely?

What helps you remember that you were created in God’s image? That He loves you so much? That God has a plan for you? (Genesis 1:26; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:10)

Back to the story!

An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." – Luke 2:9-14

Great news! Your Savior has arrived! Your peace with God has come in the form of a baby wrapped in cloths! (P.S. Do not be afraid.) This was the promised Messiah (Chosen One/ Anointed One) that the Jewish people had been looking forward to for 4,000 years. The angels were proclaiming to the shepherds that joy has come into their lives regardless of their job title, marital status, the little money they had in the bank, unstylish clothes, or community opinion of them.

What would you have felt? What would you have done when you saw and heard the angels?

The Conclusion of Our Story

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph,

and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. – Luke 2:15-18

What happened to the dark night? The possible loneliness the shepherds were feeling? The chilly temperatures that had them shivering? They were overcome with hope and joy and forgot about the things of this world that can sometimes get us down.

Everything changed with the birth of Jesus! The life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus changes everything. Every single person, from the shepherd to the Emperor of Rome, now has the opportunity to be saved and have joy in Jesus. AND that joy is to be shared, not kept to ourselves. We are to go to the “shepherds” in our community and show them the love of Jesus and give them hope in the One who came to save them.

Jesus tells us a parable where He is the King and we are His sheep. In Matthew 25: 40, He is saying that whatever we do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of His, we did for Him! Examples He uses are giving food, drink, hospitality, clothes, help, and even visiting in prison. Ultimately, Jesus is saying that we are to help those who are down and out physically and emotionally, in honor of Him. We are to share this good news of great joy with those who need to hear about Jesus. We need to bring hope, joy, peace, and love to those who might be lonely this Christmas.

Who knows? Maybe they will be like the shepherds and go and tell the world about the remedy to loneliness—being reconciled to the God who loves us.

DISCUSS

- Who do you know that might be lonely this Christmas? (Widows, orphans, foster care kids, people who have lost loved ones this year, etc.)
- What are some ways you can help those who may be struggling with loneliness this Christmas?

ACTION

- For a great current depiction of what it may have been like for the shepherds, watch this Chosen pilot episode- The Shepherd.



