

“Oh Holy Night”
Luke 2:8-20 (NLT)

On December 24th 1906 something happened that had never happened before. Sailors sailing along the Atlantic coast of the United States, for the very first time, heard a voice come over the radio. Before that time all they had ever heard was morse code.

But on Christmas Eve, in 1906 they didn't hear the dots and dashes of morse code...they heard the song “O Holy Night” and then a voice... and that voice said these words...

“ 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Merry Christmas to all”

The first words that were spoken over the radio were from Luke Chapter 2...

I'm sure that those sailors hearing that voice come over the radio for the first time were in awe, and they probably had no idea that they were part of something that was going to change the world forever...

By the 1930's most homes in America had a radio, where they could hear news, and they could be entertained with music and programming...

As special as that first radio broadcast was, it was pointing back to something even more astonishing...The words that we just read from Luke chapter two point to another world changing event...That is of course, the birth of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ!

It was truly a Holy Night...Let me give you a couple of reasons why...

It was the night the angels SPOKE

Now when we talk about angels, people get all kinds of ideas...are angels really chubby little babies with wings?

Do they play harps? Are they like Clarence from "It's a Wonderful Life"?

They have to do something nice for someone so they can earn their wings...

Angels do exist...They are mentioned over 300 times in the Bible. Some of them do nothing but praise God in Heaven...

Some of them are sent on spiritual missions here on earth...and here in our text we see them announcing the news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds who are out in the field...

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.

11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”-Luke 2:8-12 (NLT)

So the angel spoke and the first thing he says is don't be afraid...why? Because it freaked the shepherds out!

And you know what? You and I would probably be freaked out too! But aside from being startled...there's another reason for the angel to say don't be afraid...and you and I can identify with this one...It's because the world is a scary place...

Think about all of the chaos and the violence and the lawlessness that we see on a daily basis in our own city...Where can we find hope?

So the angel says...Hey I know that you're surrounded by a lot of bad news, I know that you spend your days worrying about everything...but you don't have to be afraid anymore...I've got some good news not just for you but for all people!

Did you ever stop to think that the first preacher of the gospel was an angel declaring that you don't have to be afraid anymore!

Then in verse 13 we see that a multitude of angels appear and look at what they all say in verse 14

14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."-Luke 2:14 (NLT)

This night was different from every other night because this was the night that the angels spoke about Jesus leaving His throne in Heaven and coming to earth to save us...

In other words the spiritual darkness which had covered the world since Genesis Chapter 3 was about to be shattered...We're about to sing the song "Oh Holy Night" and verse 1 says...

"Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope-the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!"

This was the condition of the world, before the birth of Jesus...the world was hopeless but now it's become hopeful because God has come to save the world from Satan's grip!

This was a holy night because the angels spoke
It was a holy night because...

It was the night the shepherds SAW

Have you ever been startled by something in the middle of the night?

Mikey standing over our bed

That rush of adrenaline...

That fight or flight kicks in...

It's that feeling you get when you see a water bug crawling up the wall...

So you can imagine how dark it must have been out there in the fields...It's quiet...all you hear is the sheep...

9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified,-Luke 2:9 (NLT)

So suddenly out of nowhere they are surrounded by bright light...the glory of God...
The same glory that surrounded Abraham...
The same glory that surrounded Moses...
The same glory that fell in the Tabernacle and later on in the Temple...

The same glory that Isaiah & Ezekiel saw...
It had been over 500 years since someone saw
the glory of God like that...

And now suddenly...out in the middle of a field
the shepherds are surrounded by the glory of
God...and an angel appears!

So get this...the first preacher of the gospel
was an angel...that's pretty significant...
But the first hearers of the gospel were
shepherds and that's pretty significant too...

The angels didn't appear to Caesar who was
the most powerful ruler of the day...

The angels didn't stop and knock on Herod's
door and ask for permission to cross the
border...

The angels didn't stop and speak to the
religious leaders of the day...

They appeared to the humblest class of people...the simple shepherds...

Shepherds were a despised group of people...They were considered to be ignorant by the religious leaders...They were considered to be ceremonially unclean...they were outcasts

The angels appeared to them...
Had good news for them...
That's how God rolls by the way...

God chooses the foolish things of this world...The good news isn't just for the sophisticated or the educated...It's not just for the Hollywood elites...or those living on 5th ave...or in the Hamptons...

It's for the simple average everyday people...people like you and I...because the gospel is simple...It's good news for everyone...

It's good news to all who will hear it and accept it! So these simple shepherds are the first to hear about Jesus our Good Shepherd...

But there's another reason that theologians believe that the angels appeared to these shepherds...

These shepherds were caring for sheep that were being raised for a special purpose...

We know from history that the sheep that were watched in the fields by Bethlehem, were raised specifically as sacrificial sheep for the temple in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is only about 4 miles away...and at the temple a sheep had to be sacrificed every morning and every evening...Every. Single. Day.

So think about this...

The shepherds who raised sheep to sacrifice, and atone for the sins of Israel, were the first to hear the news about the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!

A couple of things that we can learn from the shepherds on this Christmas Eve...

The shepherds listened to the **MESSAGE**

Let's look at the message again 10... ***"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.*** The message is good news that brings great joy is good tidings of great joy...It's crazy how so many people think that if you follow Jesus you stop having fun...As if God is a kill-joy and not the provider of great joy! That's a lie...

Jesus is good news that brings great joy! Why? Verse 11 tells us

11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

Notice that the angel says The Savior...that's Who Jesus is...That's why He came...He came to save us from our sin...It's good news for all people...

Do you know what all people means in the Greek? It means all people!

Do you know why Jesus came to all people? Because Romans 3 tells us that all people are sinners...and so Jesus came to all people to save all people!

The Savior is for people in Israel, and Palestine, and Ukraine, and Russia, China, Africa, and America...Jesus came to save the world! This includes you...

Jesus came to die for you...

Jesus came to be your Lord...Your Savior...

So none of this "Jesus is good for you" stuff...no! Jesus is good for everybody!

Acts 4 tells us

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."-Acts 4:12 (NIV)

The shepherds looked in the **MANGER**

15 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." 16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had

happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.

18 All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, 19 but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. 20 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 2:15-20 (NLT)

The shepherds listened to the message...
They looked in the manger...

How many people only listen but never look?
So many people will listen about Jesus but
never look for Him...Never encounter Him!

These shepherds had a personal encounter
with Jesus...they worshiped God because of it!
The reality is this...

You can celebrate Christmas and never know Christ...

*"It is not enough to hear about Jesus. It is not enough to peek in the manger and say, "Oh, how nice. What a lovely scene. It gives me such good feelings." The truth is, even if Christ were born in Bethlehem a thousand times but not within you, you would be eternally lost. **The Christ who was born into the world must be born in your heart.** Religious sentiment, even at Christmas time, without the living Christ is a yellow brick road to darkness."* -Kent Hughes

The Christ who was born into the world must be born in your heart...

So we see the shepherds heard the message
They saw the manger...

The third thing we can learn from them is
The shepherds **SHARED** their testimony

17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.

18 All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished...

This is what we're doing today...and every Sunday! Just like the shepherds, our church is full of people who have encountered Jesus and can't help but tell others about Him!

Tell them that He has come to save them from their sin...Because God loves you! Because God cares about you...Because everybody is somebody to God!

That because of Jesus every single person can know God, find freedom, discover their purpose and make a difference in this life!

Maybe you're here today and you're stressed out! This life has you feeling anxious and afraid...you don't have to be afraid!

The birth of Jesus 2,023 years ago changed the world...brought hope, and joy and peace then... But the gospel can still change your world now...You can have His peace that brings great joy right now!

Don't allow the cares and fears of this world to steal your joy and your peace...Jesus is the Prince of Peace...

Pray for those who need Peace with God
Pray for those who need the peace of God

Altar Time

Oh Holy Night "Candlelight"

