

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

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Preacher: Pastor Steve Hersey

[0 : 00] I warned the people in Sunday school some more. I didn't get a lot of sleep last night. Turn to Luke chapter 2.

Luke chapter 2. You see behind me, we've talked about come thou long expected Jesus.

We talked about the fact that there was hope that Jesus Christ was coming. We talked about yeah.

What did we talk about last week? I forgot all of a sudden. Humility. Humility. It had to do with humility. I remember that. I forgot what the song was. And second of all, and third, today, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, and we're going to talk about proclamation.

Proclaiming what Jesus Christ has done for us. So, if you were to go to London, you would find in London the home of John Wesley. John Wesley is the founder of the Methodist Church.

[1 : 13] And he says, in that facility where John Wesley had his house, it was also a chapel attached to that house where he and his brother used to hold services.

There was a larger church there now. It doesn't always preach the things that it should. But the church that John Wesley had, that little chapel, they taught the truth of God's word there.

Matter of fact, it was a church set up a lot like this. It had wooden benches. It didn't have backs on them and everything. It just had benches. They were kind of curved so everybody was looking at the pulpit and everything.

Off to the side, there was a little organ. Charles Wesley would play that organ and he would write songs and things there for the services. Now picture, 1700s, the common people of England, of London.

They would be coming to that church to hear the word of God. And they'd be coming to learn new songs that Charles Wesley wrote in order to be able to be taught.

[2 : 21] Because some of them were illiterate. And so, they would learn truths of the gospel by singing the songs. They'd learn truths of God's word by singing the song. Matter of fact, I mentioned this a few weeks ago about Charles Wesley.

In 50 years, he wrote 6,500 songs. Can you imagine? That's 130 a year. That's more than one a week.

That's a lot of music that he's been writing. And Hark the Herald Angels Sing is one of those songs that Charles Wesley wrote. And he wrote it, again, for the idea that he had just been saved for a year and he wrote it because he wanted the people to understand the truths of the incarnation.

Big word means God coming down in the flesh. And he wanted him to understand the joys of the fact that Jesus Christ was born and came to this world.

If you were to listen to Charles Wesley's version, if he's sitting there at that organ and he's playing it, you might not recognize some of the song that we just sang. His started off with these words.

[3 : 33] It said, Hark how all the welkin rings. And you're going, what? Hark how all the welkin rings. Welkin was an old English word for the heavens.

Hark how the heavens ring. A friend of his by the name of George Whitefield, George Whitefield is famous for the fact that he was an evangelist.

He came to America in the 1700s. He began what is known as the Great Awakening. George Whitefield changed that first line to Hark the Herald Angels sing.

The one that we sing today. And actually, if you had been around and Wesley had composed that hymn and you were singing it, he had a little bit different melody, too. You'll see in your book there, it says that Felix Mendelssohn wrote the music.

Mendelssohn wrote a song commemorating the 400th anniversary of Gutenberg's movable type printing press that made the mass production of the Bible possible.

[4 : 37] And they took that tune, put it with Wesley's words, and we have the song that we just sang, Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Carol teaches some deep truths about Christmas and about who God is.

Look with me there in Luke chapter 2, beginning at verse 8. Luke 2, verse 8, it says, And they were in the same country, shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

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

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

[5 : 56] And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they there heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. Let's have a word prayer. Father, we just thank you for this time to look this morning at this passage of Scripture.

Thank you that you have placed this in your Scripture to show us the role of the shepherds, the role of the angels, the fact that we should be so excited because we have a Savior which is Christ the Lord.

Lord, I pray this morning that you'd help us to learn, you'd help us to be excited, you'd help us to be inspired, you'd help us to know the truth of what you have here for us.

Lord, open our eyes, open our minds, open our hearts to the truths you have for us today. In Jesus' name, amen. This passage kind of has a cycle to it.

[7 : 13] The angels make a proclamation and as part of that proclamation, there's an invitation to the shepherds. by the time we're done, the shepherds are going to be making a proclamation and giving invitation to those who are around them.

If you get an invitation to something, say it's a bridal shower or a baby shower or something like that, what does it usually give you for information? Who, what, when, where, all that sort of stuff so that you know what's going on and what's happening, right?

Let's look at this in that way. First of all, who? This was written to common people, everyday people just like you and I. It wasn't written to royalty.

It wasn't written to the upper crust. It was written so that the average individual could understand and here's why. God invited anyone to come and see the newborn Jesus.

It wasn't just for the older people. It wasn't just for the royalty. It wasn't just for the wise men who were going to show up later. He sent the message, first of all, to the shepherds so that everybody could know that they are invited.

[8 : 31] Everybody can come in. It says there in verse 8, and they were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. For centuries, Bethlehem had been known for its shepherds and sheep all the way back to the time of King David.

Remember, David was a shepherd boy and he lived in Bethlehem. Now, Bethlehem is only six miles from Jerusalem, which worked out really well because they're raising all these sheep.

What was used at the temple as part of their sacrificial system? Sheep, lambs, right? So here these guys are six miles away, close proximity to be able to get sheep and lambs to the temple, but far enough away to keep all the mess and the smells and everything away from the city.

So here they are, they're out there raising these sheep. These shepherds, they're the blue-collar workers of today. You know, they went and did their job every day.

They were diligent about it. They were humble. They were the, you know, the salt of the earth type people that we kind of think of ourselves maybe being because we are not the upper crust and everything.

[9 : 50] They were despised by others, especially those who were of the upper crust because they had this job of taking care of animals.

And because of that job of taking care of animals, you think of the irony here. They are taking care of the sheep that are going to be used in the temple sacrifices. And yet, they could not go to the temple or go inside the temple because they were considered unclean because they raised the sheep that were used.

So they were used to being by themselves. They were used to being alone, kind of obscure. People kind of tolerated them, you know, being out there and stuff, but nobody invited them to their home.

nobody asked them to come anywhere. The fact that God used these men to be the first to hear about the birth of Christ is just kind of amazing.

It tells you something about the heart of God. God says, I'm interested in everybody. I'm interested in those people that most people tend to shun.

[11 : 02] I'm interested in those. God invites people not because it will benefit him, but because he loves them. God loves each and every one of us and he invites us.

Reminds me of the end of the book. Revelation chapter 22 verse 17. Listen to what it says. And the spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come, and let him that is a thirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.

God says, everybody is invited. Everybody can be a part. Everybody can be a part of my kingdom and be a part of my family. He reaches out to the outcasts.

He reaches out to those who are hurting. He reaches out to those who may be going through things. How does God feel about those people?

Let me read you some verses. Psalm 34 18. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

[12 : 08] Psalm 147 3. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. Isaiah 61 1. The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.

He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

He says, I'm here for all of you who are suffering, all of those of you who are going through need. Matthew chapter 11 verse 28 in the New Testament, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Luke 19 10, for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. You see who God's interested in? He's interested in everybody, but especially those who are going through tough times, especially those who are facing a hard life, especially those who may not see all the benefits that everybody else does.

Now, he's interested in everybody. Don't leave out the rich and the famous and all those people. He's interested in everybody, but he seems to have a special place for those who are suffering. There's nothing self-serving about God.

[13 : 27] Those who cannot help him, per se, those who can't really add anything, he says, I'm inviting you to come too. Why? Because I love you. I sent Jesus to die for you.

I love you. There's another reason I think God let the shepherds know first. They're shepherds. They're used to taking care of sheep.

Remember John the Baptist in John chapter 1, verse 29? What did he say about Jesus? behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Who knows better about taking care of lambs than shepherds? And he says, I want these shepherds, these who prepare the sacrifices. Jesus is about to be the sacrifice for the sins of the entire world.

I want these shepherds to understand what's going on. So who? Common people. What does he have for message for them? A Savior is born.

[14 : 29] A Savior is born. You know, think about being there that day. The thrill of seeing that angel appear in the sky.

The thrill of seeing God's glory. Look at verse 9. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were so afraid.

Think about this for a second. One angel appears, and has the glory of God, and they're scared to death. If you're scared now, wait a minute.

They've got one angel, they're scared, and you think about they're seeing the glory of God and his greatness. Excuse me. Here's grown men.

rugged men, hard-working men. It takes a lot to scare them. You remember talking about David back when he was a shepherd boy. What did he say he did when he was a shepherd boy?

[15 : 32] He killed a lion and a bear. So these guys were used to seeing things that were scary. They were used to confronting things that were scary.

But the angel appeared in the sky in the glory of God, and they're like, oh, what is this? And what was the angel's first word? Fear not. You know, look at verse 10.

The angel said unto them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

There is no better news that the angel could have given those shepherds. for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

A Savior was going to be born. A Savior was born. And he says, the angel said, it's good tidings, good news that I'm giving to you.

[16 : 37] It's the same word that we use for our word gospel, good news. Then getting the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ was being given to them that God wanted that news to be made known to everyone.

And he's going to use those shepherds to start the process. See, the Jews at the time, they knew about a coming Messiah. They had been taught about a coming Messiah.

And they were looking for a political deliverer. They were looking for someone who was going to meet their needs politically and lead them away from the Romans. Prophecies we know now, deal with the second coming of Christ.

The first thing they needed was a Savior. Not a political deliverer, but a Savior who would help forgive them of their sins.

As a matter of fact, if you go back and look through the Old Testament now, Isaiah 53 talks about atonement for sins from this Messiah who's going to come. Isaiah 49 talks about the fact that he wasn't coming for the Jews only, he was coming for the whole world.

[17 : 43] So this first birth announcement, the angel emphasized that Jesus came to be a Savior. There's an old thing that you've probably seen around at different times at different Christmases.

It goes like this. If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent an economist, but since our greatest need was forgiveness, God sent a Savior.

That's what we needed. Sin was rampant. Sin is rampant. We need a Savior. And the great thing about it is he says he sent it for everyone.

He sent him for everyone. This Savior that we have came for the entire world. When we lived in Fort Lauderdale, we were part of a church down there that was multicultural.

We had people from Haiti and Bahamas, Jamaica, Cuba.

[18 : 58] We even had another lady from Maine who lived there with us who actually was born in Germany. We had people from all over the world in that church. And you know what the great thing about it was? We all were united in the fact that we had Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Here this year, remember back in the middle of the summer, we had a group of 14 show up one Sunday, visitors. They were from Chicago, but every one of them had been born in the Philippines.

They were on a vacation together, and they came, and we worshipped together, and we had a common theme, Jesus Christ. He saves all. We even supported our missionaries back there.

We support a man from the Middle East. See, God came for everyone. As a matter of fact, it kind of reminds you, when you look at churches like that, it reminds you of why Jesus did come, and what it's going to be like when we get to heaven.

Romans chapter 7, verses 9 and 10, it says this, after this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues stood before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes and palms in their hands and cried with a loud voice saying, salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.

[20 : 28] He says everybody all over the world is going to be ready to say salvation to our God. What did that angel tell those shepherds?

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. He brought salvation to all who will accept him. You know, it's amazing.

The Bible, you hear people talk today about being inclusive. The Bible is so inclusive. whosoever will may come.

Anybody who wants salvation, he says, it will come. But he also said, look at there in verse 11 again. He says, verse 10, the end of verse 10, he says, it shall be to all people.

Then he says, for unto you is born this day. See, it's inclusive. Everybody can have it, but it's also very particular. It's for you. You.

[21 : 28] And you. He says, he came for everyone. The Bible, the gospel, he says, for all people. But it's for me.

Jesus is the Savior for the world. But he's also my personal Savior. Do we understand the relationship we have with him? So we've got who?

We've got what? Where? A manger. A manger. See, the angels didn't just give information.

They brought an invitation. They told him exactly where they needed to go. Verse 12, and this shall be a sign unto you.

You shall find the babe wrapped in swathing clothes, lying in a manger. Why did he give them that information? Because he wanted them to go and see. He wanted them to go and find him.

[22 : 25] He says, you're going to find the babe. You know, shepherds were familiar with mangers. They understood what a manger was, and they knew it wasn't a place you usually put babies.

So he says, the angel says, you go and you're going to find a baby in a manger. Okay, that's pretty specific. We know exactly what we're looking for, because most babies aren't in mangers.

so they go and they look. Again, Jesus being in a manger as the Lamb of God.

He's the Lamb of God. He's also King of Kings. You expect him to be in a palace. But he chose to go to a manger.

He chose to go for a place meant for animals. Why did he go there? Because there was no room in him. All by plan, all by purpose.

[23 : 28] He says, you're going to find him in a manger. So that's where we're going to meet. You shepherds, you're going to come, you're going to meet him at a manger. When?

Now. Right? Now. You remember last week I talked about Mary and I said that song that she sang in chapter one, the year of Luke, was the very first Christmas carol?

Well, here's the second one. Look at verse 13 and 14. And suddenly there was with the angel of multitude, the heavenly host, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill to men.

Again, imagine these shepherds. One angel, glory of God, they're scared to death. now it says that angel had a heavenly host.

Kind of like that picture I got up there. There's just a bunch of them. The sky's filled with them. Think about being scared before. But what are they doing?

[24 : 34] They're singing. They're praising God. Can you imagine being there that night? what would it have been like to be one of those shepherds and to see what is happening in front of them?

When those other angels appeared, I can just picture those guys. Their eyes are bugging out of their head. Their mouths are like, whoa, are you seeing what I'm seeing?

Yeah, I am. If you're seeing a whole bunch of angels, yeah. You know, they're just amazing, the things that are going on and the things that they're seeing there.

Everything about what they were seeing, everything about what they were hearing, it was amazing. And the interesting thing though is, when it was done and over with, did they just stand there and go, wow?

No, what does it say? Verse 15 and 16. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said, one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

[25 : 48] And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. They didn't just sit around and debate what had just happened. They didn't just sit around and say, oh, you know, we need a former committee to go explore this.

We need to get together and talk about what we've just seen and how we're going to handle this and what we're going to do. can you imagine?

That word haste there in verse 16, it has the idea of not just being in a hurry, but the idea of wanting something so much that you do whatever it takes to get to where it is.

There was nothing that was going to hold these guys back. There was nothing that was going to stop them from going to seeing what God had for them. We need to learn the same lesson.

How are we going to act? When God gives us a command from his word, when he gives us direction from his word, what are we going to do with it? Look at Psalm 119 verse 60.

[26 : 55] I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments. I made haste and I is going to keep your commandments.

What has God been telling you this Christmas season? And you're getting ready for Christmas on Wednesday and you've been reading through the word of God. What does God's word tell you you need to be doing?

And are you stopping and thinking and saying that's interesting or are we doing what he says? What instructions has he given to you? What step of faith?

We need to be like those disciples. We need to do it with haste. Get up and go and do what God is telling you. So here's the invitation. You got the who, the what, the where, the when.

You've got an invitation to come. Those shepherds, they got up, they went. They saw.

[28 : 02] And then what did they do? The cycle starts over again. They went to proclaim the invitation. They had seen everything God wanted them to see.

You know, it's interesting. They went there and they saw Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. It tells us, you know what it doesn't tell us? It doesn't tell us a thing about what happened there.

It doesn't say what conversations they had with Mary and Joseph. It doesn't tell us about the conversations they had with one another. They didn't tell us what they did about the baby being there, other than they went and they saw because the angels had told them to.

And when they went and saw there was something they saw that sparked a real interest in them because it does tell us what they did next. Look at verse 17 and 18.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

[29 : 15] When you meet Jesus, it's going to make a difference in your life. When you meet Jesus, you're not going to be able to contain it in yourself.

When you meet Jesus, you're going to take tidings of great joy to all people. When we truly understand who Jesus is, when we truly meet him for who he is, it's going to make a difference in our life.

That inclusive invitation that God has given is going to affect our lives and we're going to share it with other people. You know, what's the most important message we can share with the people of this world, with our friends, our relatives, those around us, the message of Christmas?

God came to this world to be born, grow up, die for our sins, and then be resurrected and returned to heaven, having conquered death and hell and sin.

We have a message for people. We have an invitation for people that we need to give them. The shepherds should be an encouragement to us.

[30 : 41] Ordinary, everyday, hard-working people, and yet God used them to take a message. What are we?

everyday, hard-working, ordinary people. But God has given us a message to take to those around us.

They weren't trained theologians, they didn't know all of the Torah and everything else and stuff. They had just listened to the message of the angels, they had checked it out for themselves, and they went out and they were sharing with others.

You know, how do we have a heart to do that like they did? Two things, very quickly. Visit the manger. Say, I've got to go all the way to Bethlehem and look at the place where you...

No. I mean, when you read this passage of Scripture, I've told you before, I got saved when I was... My parents got saved when I was three years old. And we read this passage of Scripture every year.

[31 : 50] Before we would open presents, we would read this passage of Scripture. I can quote most of this passage of Scripture for you. He says, look at this passage of Scripture.

Look at it like you're looking at it for the very first time. Understand the importance of it. Understand what it's saying. Be encouraged by it. Be enlightened by it.

Be inspired by it. Jesus came in the flesh so that we might have salvation. And then, once you visited the manger again, think of someone that you can tell.

Someone that you can tell that message to. we sing Hark the herald angels sing. Meditate on the greatness of God coming in the flesh.

That's part of what that song is about. God became a man for the world. Yep. But God became a man for you and for you and for me.

[33 : 10] He became a man. He became the perfect lamb of God. He gave his life so that we might be redeemed from our sins. God did that for us.

What a great invitation to give to others. That you can have the exact same thing. And it's not a matter of me being deep theologically and all that. It's a matter of me saying this is what God has told me.

This is what I read in his word. I'm just sharing it with you. I'm just giving you what God gave me. You know, we need to go out and let others know.

We need to go out. Maybe rewrite the song. Hark, the ordinary person sings. the truths of God's word to those around them.

You say, but I don't sing very well. Okay, hark, the ordinary person tells what God has done to them. See, just like these shepherds, ordinary, nothing special, God can use any one of us.

[34 : 26] If he can use shepherds, he can use us. He can use us. He can use us. He can use if you're here this morning and you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, I'll be glad to take God's word and show you how you can know 100% for sure that you are on your way to heaven.

I'll take God's word or I'll have someone here that I know can tell you and then have them work with you, show you from the word of God how you can know, not just guess, and that's not saying maybe, how you can know that you're on your way to heaven.

But I'm going to end this morning with a different type of invitation song. If you want to know more about Christ, talk to me as I'll be at the back and I will talk with you and show you. But I'm going to end this morning with us who are Christians.

He says, look, be like the shepherds. Look, be ready to go and tell the story, give the invitation. So, page 212. And if you hear of from grammatwork.

The telling about the truth is to how