

The Shepherd Child

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Date: 24 December 2023

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- [0 : 0 0] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.
- And now, today's sermon. Remain standing with me as we continue to read on page 5, Luke chapter 2, verses 8 through 14.
- As I read, you guys can be seated. And in the same region, for those of you who'd like to read on your Bibles, this is going to be Luke chapter 2, verses 8 through 14. Luke 2, 8 through 14.
- In the same region, there were shepherds out on the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And they were filled with great fear.
- 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. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.
- [1 : 0 0] And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddly clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly, there was an angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.
- This is the word of the Lord. Father, may you come and bless this reading to our hearts now through the preaching as well. In Christ's name, amen. Please be seated. All right, kids.
- I need your help again this morning. So please be ready. And for those of you that are needing a title, besides my son Knox, the title of this morning is called The Shepherd Child.
- The Shepherd Child. This is also going to be connected to what we've been studying. For those of you that are visiting, we've been working through 1 Peter chapter 1. We're going to be working through both of his books, 1 and 2 Peter.
- We will make a connection there in just a minute. But to begin this morning, I want to make some simple observation at how we have to remind ourselves that the writers of the New Testament were human.
- [2 : 1 3] And at times, even our Lord, being human, had a sense of humor in the way in which they would say things. In the way in which they would write certain activities. For instance, it being documented that Peter beat John to the tomb.
- It was probably something that Peter wanted to make sure everyone knew. But there's a phrase that's said here in Luke chapter 2 verse 8. It says, in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks.
- Now let's talk about shepherds for a moment. Just from what we know from the Old Testament. This might be new for you, but we do know that men were shepherds in the Old Testament. But women were too, believe it or not.

Rachel watched over her flock. Her father's flock. We know that Sapporo did as well. There were multiple times Moses was in the desert when he had fled Israel. What did he walk upon?

Sisters who were watching over the sheep. So men and women are both shepherds. But it tends to be a very hard job. Meaning, they're watching their flock at night.

[3 : 18] And typically you watch them at night because of two things. The sheep will wander off. Or number two, predators. So shepherds were brave men. Typically tough, or women.

Typically tough, able to fight off wild animals. Carry sheep. And so when you read of this letter of Luke. And he's talking about this angel appears. And he says when he appeared, what did it do to these men?

Verse 9. And the angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And they were filled with great fear. In my mind, it doesn't take very much to make me afraid.

I see a shadow and I'm like running for the door. These guys I'm pretty sure have seen some pretty scary things. But this, some even translated that they were filled with terrible, they were terribly frightened.

And so the angel obviously sees this and says, fear not, don't worry. He calms them down. And he begins to calm them down.

[4 : 19] He is explaining to them why he's there. If they are in the city of Jerusalem and these are shepherds who are Jews, which means they would know, have at this point, be very familiar with the first five books of the law, which are Moses' books.

And they would be aware of the Messiah that is to come. And so this information does cause their hearts to calm down, their blood pressure to come down a little bit. But this is where part of the story to me is funny.

You just have to understand how my brain works. I was reading this and I was like, this is Luke being funny, in my opinion. I could be completely wrong, but this is just for your enjoyment of how to read your Bible.

If you drop down to verse 12, the angel is finishing up giving them good news. And in verse 12 it says, And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was, with the angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God. They were already freaked out by one. How do you think they felt about, according to some, this is thousands upon thousands, immediately appearing out of nowhere singing?

[5 : 27] Sorry, I just thought it was funny. I mean, this is how it went down in my head. It's all right. They finally get the commission from God, the heavenly hosts. You're to go. And you're going to go to these specific men in a field, which we're going to talk about in a minute.

And this is an important announcement. Do you realize there's only one other time in all of history that we know of that the heavenly hosts, those who were in the heavenly realm with God, these created beings, came and worshipped and sang?

One other time, Job 38 tells us, at the point of creation, when Jesus came and created the world, the heavenly hosts sang to worship him. And so the second time the heavenly hosts show up is in a field with a bunch of smelly shepherds.

And this moment is so significant to our world, we actually have a way to describe the shift in history. Most of you might know this. B.C. to A.D., right?

And we've heard all kinds of reasons of why that may have changed. But B.C. stands before Christ. And there's a shift in the calendar. There's a shift in our history because the heavenly hosts show up and say, guess what period of time we're in now?

[6 : 37] No longer before the Messiah, right? He has come. The Lord has ascended. I think it's important for us to feel the weight of this.

These shepherds would have felt the weight of it. But as I was reading that, I did laugh out loud thinking, I'm sure these angels had a little bit of fun as they came out singing in the choir, looking at their faces.

I don't know about you, but I've never seen an entire thousands of people up in the sky singing. Pretty awe-stricken. Here's what's awesome, though. It's gonna happen a third time.

Do you know when it happens? He comes and gets us. And I don't think that's gonna be a moment we're gonna wanna miss. It's gonna be amazing. What I do find interesting, though, is I would say that this is not the first time we've had a revelation.

We call it different these days. We call them gender reveals. Now, I've had four children. We never did a gender reveal other than sitting at the doctor's office and said, yep, you're having a girl.

[7 : 47] That was about as big as the reveal would be. But I don't know about you, it's amazing. I just went and searched craziest gender reveals of all time. There were too many. But the ones that I found interesting, someone dropped a car from a crane.

Literally dropped a car from a crane upside down and when it smashed, blue powder came flying out of it. The other one was a plane. They were out in a field and a plane comes flying by and drops pink powder over the top of their heads.

I was like, wow, this is like intense. But the craziest one was a guy had a pole with a black balloon on the end of it and he was shoving it into the alligator's mouth. And once the alligator bit down, blue powder came out.

As crazy as those are, I'm pretty sure it doesn't match to the revelation of what those shepherds saw. Immediately they leave and they go to find this king.

But this morning, there's a significance about why did the angels, why were they sent by God to these specific shepherds? And this is a part of the story that we can often look over too quickly and I don't want to do that this morning.

[9 : 02] There's a reason why they came here. You can write this down. This is later on. Jesus says in the same book, Luke chapter 10 and verse 21, Jesus makes this reference and he says this in reflection.

In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. Verse 22, all things have been handed over to me by the Father and no one knows the Son except the Father, whoever the Father has except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

And listen to this, verse 23, then turning to the disciples, he said privately, blessed are your eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desire to see what you see and did not see it and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

Does that sound remotely similar to 1 Peter? Peter is writing to us, the church, saying that there is this gap between the announcements of the prophets, what we read about Isaiah and Jeremiah and the Psalms, but they could not figure out exactly when this would take place.

[10 : 29] They longed to know. Jesus says they won't know. 1 Peter says it himself that they were actually told, you're doing work, you're prophesying for a whole other generation, which is our generation.

And to just answer the question, why? Why did God hold this information back? Why is it being revealed to shepherds but not to everyone else in the world? Well, as a reminder from last week, 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 8, interesting verse, Paul tells us why Jesus has been a mystery and his birth was hidden for this very reason.

1 Corinthians 2, 8, none of the rulers of this age understood this for if they had, they would have not crucified the Lord of glory. They would have not participated in the gospel of it taking place of Christ dying for our sins.

So God in his providence keeps the message of the Messiah secret and hidden. And the very first group of people to find out are your least likely.

In our opinions, probably, when you have important news, you tend to tell important people. So those important people can then what? Verify the message and then share the message.

[11 : 48] Well, this is not how God chose to do this. This is not how he wants us to proclaim it. So children, I want you guys to help me out this morning.

When we're thinking about this concept of Messiah or the concept of shepherd, sorry, we have to ask ourselves, what is the significance of shepherds?

What is the significance of shepherds? So this is what I want us to do. I want us to think through history of the Bible and think about the biggest moments in our Bible and who are they related to.

All right? I'm going to name you three men and I want you to tell me what they all have in common. You guys ready? Here are the three men. What do they all have in common? Abraham, Moses, and David.

What were they? Can I hear it? Shepherds. Who said that? That was awesome. Good job. They were all shepherds. But they aren't just shepherds. That's not just an interesting, there's lots of shepherds throughout the Old Testament, lots of shepherds in the Bible.

[12 : 50] But there's something significant about why God chose shepherds and that's what we're going to look at this morning. The whole story of God's redemption, of coming to be our Savior is actually tied up into this metaphor, not metaphor, but this occupation of shepherds.

So this morning, we're going to quickly look at the three reasons why God chose shepherds not only to develop his plan, but to reveal it to the world. So here are, for those of you that are taking notes, here's your outline for this morning.

Reason number one is their lowly status, these shepherds and their lowly status. Number two, their long heritage, what they were related to in the story of redemption and number three, their life picture.

Yes, we used all L's. I was very excited about that this morning. All right. Their lowly status. This is, go ahead and turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter one.

This is so important. If you don't get the other points this morning, get this one. This is, God has always designed his salvation, his work, and his means through the small, weak, meager, nobodies.

[14 : 13] This is how he's always worked. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter one and verse 27. It says, but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

So if you're sitting here this morning and you hold the title Christian, a child of God, you believe you've been adopted by him, this is how your God sees you according to Paul.

Foolish, weak, low, despised, things that don't matter. That's how he sees you. If you feel that way, then you're good because this is how God identifies us.

He says, I didn't choose you because of what you have become or what you can do or what you have not done or how you were born or any other thing that you may think that matters to him.

[15 : 23] He says, if you feel weak and broken and distance and you feel like there's something wrong with you, then you're the right person. You are who we are looking for.

We, like the shepherds at night, were chosen to receive a powerful message. They heard it from the heavenly places at night because of the significance of what it's being brought to them.

Think of it this way. Typically, and I had to do a lot of research on this, shepherds were not normally educated men or women.

They didn't necessarily were even able to read and write. Much of what they learned was given to them verbally and because of their occupation, they spent a lot of time alone outside the city.

So they tended to be rough and smelly. But yet, they were trustworthy people because they're watching over animals but they didn't have a significant role in culture.

[16 : 24] In other words, no one was proud of the fact that they were a shepherd. But yet, God uses this in a very significant and very way, important way. Look at verse 13.

It says this, and we impart this in words not by human wisdom but by the spirit interpreting spiritual truth to those of you who are spiritual.

So here's how he did it with the the people wanting to say disciples, the shepherds. Because some of us are like, yeah, I think it would be kind of cool to see the host of heaven just shouting God's name and telling me the story.

Paul's like, that was a one-time event that was unique and special but he does something even more powerful and significant now. Read the verse again. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but by the spirit.

Listen to this. Interpreting spiritual truth to those who are spiritual. What he's saying is the gospel now comes to us because of the spirit that lives within us. That's how we are hearing and learning of God.

[17 : 29] Not of a heavenly host but God himself living inside of you. I want to go back and just kind of show you real quick the connection here between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because I think it's going to help you in understanding their heritage.

This is their lowly status. Those who would have read the Old Testament, those who lived during the New Testament would have understood that the shepherd receiving this information was a unique situation but it's also connected to number two, their long heritage.

Their long heritage. Their long heritage. We hear about this amazing child that's supposed to come in Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve, there's a story, they fall and God says, I'm going to bring a child who's going to crush the head of the serpent but here's the problem, they don't know how it's going to happen. The first person God chooses is a moon worshiper, his name is Abraham, he has some flocks and he chooses him and says to you who's almost 100 years old and his wife is like 99, he says, you are going to be a massive nation and from you the whole world will be blessed and saved.

You know, I think that old man laughed just like it says in the story, like yeah, how's that going to happen? And God brings a miracle to Abraham, this shepherd who it happens the millions of people come from him and from him the next person shows up.

[19 : 05] They're in Egypt, these people who are now called the Israelites are in Egypt, Moses is part of this, he kills a man, wanders off into the desert, is in the desert, he's now taking care of his fallen sheep and all of a sudden he finds this burning bush.

So this guy is running from his people, he's running from the Lord, he's running from the law and he finds a weak, stuttering man and says, Moses, you're going to go and deliver my people.

to which we know the story but from Moses comes another covenant, another promise.

We learn about the sacrificial system, we learn about how through the death and the use of blood our sins can be forgiven. Fast forward, Israel is now in this massive war with the Philistines.

This big giant out there his name is Goliath and who do we get introduced to once again? A small shepherd boy. God ends up choosing a shepherd again who is not in battle, who is not capable of fighting but God chooses a shepherd and from this shepherd boy he delivers his people once again but then gives another promise, another covenant to us and that is for so long the children of Israel have fallen and they keep disobeying, the kings are disobeying and so he says, David pay attention, there is coming a king and when he sits on the throne he will sit on it forever and he will have the right to sit on the throne because the way you will identify him is he will perfectly obey my law and he will never fail and when he does that everyone in the kingdom will earn his obedience.

[20 : 51] So you have a promise to Abraham that all the nations will be blessed, you have a promise to Moses that our sins can be forgiven and then you have the promise to David that the king will bring final entrance and the fourth shepherd in the story guess who it is?

It's Jesus. Right? Listen to how he describes himself. This is John chapter 10. I love how he describes himself. John 10 verse 7. So Jesus again said to them, truly, truly I say to you I am the door of the sheep.

All who came before me are thieves and robbers but the sheep do not listen to them. I am the door and if anyone enters by me he will be saved and will go in and go out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal. He's talking about Satan and his army and kill and destroy. I come that they may have life and have it abundantly. And then this is the famous phrase, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays his life down for his sheep. Jesus brings as this fourth shepherd he brings the final covenant and that is what's called the new covenant or we know it as the covenant of grace.

[22 : 05] God's grace covers our shame and our sin. This is why he says I have to lay my life down for you because my blood is going to cover your shame but as the king my obedience will give you eternal life with the father forever.

It's just a story of God using shepherds and Jesus himself who is the king of kings and the lord of lords I mean there is no one greater in all of the universe because he is the creator of the universe decides to come and be born in a stable to continue to show that God is loving and caring and for those who are weak and the not those who are without this is who he comes to.

Sometimes we sing these parts of our songs but we don't understand and so this leads us from not only their heritage this is why the angels came to these shepherds because of the line of the heritage but lastly it's their life picture.

I think it's interesting where Jesus ends up being born this is Luke chapter 2 verse 11 it says for unto you was born this day in the city of David shepherd a savior who is Christ the Lord and this will be a sign for you you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.

The concept of this being our good shepherd came into existence among the sheep. This young shepherd child swaddling clothes there's a lot you can read about this but I'll tell you this from my understanding they would write these strips of paper or cloth they would wrap children in it right after they were born but they would also wrap the lambs that were first born in them as well.

[24 : 01] What does John say about Jesus? Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. These men who are in the field watching these sheep being Jewish men knowing the law would know they just heard about the final sacrifice.

They just heard about the final lamb. And so why did they choose to reveal us to these shepherds?

because it's how God does his work their lowly status. It's how God has fulfilled his promises their heritage and lastly their life picture.

How many times even God being referenced in Psalm 23 the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. You see being equated to a sheep that's not a good thing.

That's a very bad thing. You know if someone were to say like John you're like a you're like a strong workhorse you're like a bull I'd be like yeah. It's like no man you're like a stinky dumb sheep who often gets lost eat things you shouldn't eat and you roll in poop.

[25 : 14] Sorry parents you roll in stuff you shouldn't roll in. I'm in trouble for that one later. You're not allowed to say that. But yet it is true it is a true statement of who we are because Paul describes this is true and there's there's a sense of relaxing that happens for me that goes my God is not looking with me at these high expectations because my sin is ever destroying me constantly.

And so I'll just leave you with this one last passage. Keep your finger in Luke 2 we have one last verse we're going to read there but this is 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians the angels brought this message to the shepherds the shepherds went and confirmed it and when they left there they told the whole city about what they had saw and Luke says the city was in awe.

The city was in awe. These men not well spoken their profession is not to speak think about it their profession is to talk to dogs and to sheep and they became the first messengers of the God of the universe.

So when God turns to you and to me and he reminds you of why you belong to him and he reminds you that he's not looking at your strength but your weakness he reminds you that it's his blood that covers your sins not your obedience he reminds you that he loves you not because you've done something to earn it but because he chose to love you Paul gives us this announcement in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 18 all this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that is in Christ God we God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God just like the shepherds

God comes to us and says do you realize that you have a message within your mouth within your heart and your mind that can relieve people from their sin and their shame relieve them from their traps and you can give them reconciliation that means to be brought back under the favor of God so as this story comes to an end and most of us know it well I've always loved this verse I think it's a good reminder for what we should see of today in our time together Luke chapter 2 verse 19 Mary's observing these shepherds there and it says Mary treasured all these things pondering them in her heart at times this part of our season is exciting and there's a lot to be thankful for and for family but as we think about who

[28 : 42] Jesus Christ is for us it would do us all well to ponder what Christ has done for us and keep them in our heart meaning that it's the most sacred part of who we are you see the birth of Christ means nothing if he did not fulfill his death and his death is why we celebrate his birth because they could not stop him and so we have a reason to celebrate his birth this morning and we're going to couple the celebration of his birth with the celebration of his death because it says he was born to die that's how John introduces Jesus as he's walking into the water to be baptized he says the purpose of this man's life is his death and so we're going to take time this morning and contemplate the ultimate reason for Christ's birth and that is his death we have two tables in the back of the room one for either side of the room these are for the children of God these are for people who have put their faith in Christ and so let me encourage you if you've not put your faith in Christ you've not received the sign of baptism

I encourage you not to participate in taking these but if you have please come to the table I love this song that we just sang all you who are weak all you who have sinned all you who have failed come there's a song we're about to sing I need to point it out most of us know the Christmas song come all you faithful this song was written in response to it and listen to the opening lines oh come all you unfaithful come weak and unstable come know you are not alone come barren and waiting ones weary of praying come see what your God has done he's calling you not because you've been faithful he's calling you because he was faithful amen amen let's go ahead and begin in the back rows thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill Tennessee where everyone is in equal need of grace to plan a visit or to learn more about us visit our website at gracereformed.org