



The Summit Church: Christmas Family Devotional

Read

And in the same region there were shepherds out in 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 around 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 a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and 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 among those with whom he is pleased!'

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.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

- Luke 2:8–20 (ESV)

Reflect

When Jesus was born, most of the world didn't notice. Caesar Augustus, the emperor of the Roman world, whose census had forced Mary and Joseph to have their baby in Bethlehem, never even heard of Jesus (Luke 2:1). The innkeeper who turned Mary and Joseph away probably never realized who he had rejected (Luke 2:7). Jesus, the world's true king, entered without fanfare.

On the other hand, some of those who learned about the baby Jesus didn't like what they heard. The Jewish King Herod, for instance, rather than recognizing Jesus' birth as the fulfillment of prophecy, only saw it as a threat (Matthew 2:3–8, 16–18).

Some didn't notice Jesus. Some rejected him before they ever met him. But to a select few, God revealed himself. Like the shepherds, the very first people to celebrate Christmas with Jesus (Luke 2:15–16).

It was no accident that God picked shepherds to be the first. Throughout the Old Testament, God referred to himself as the Shepherd of his people (Ezekiel 34:11–12, 23; Psalm 23). He charged his priests and rulers with caring for God’s people using the same metaphor (Jeremiah 3:14–15; 10:21; 23:1–8; 50:6–7). And many of Israel’s most notable leaders—Abel, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David—were literal shepherds (Genesis 4; 21; 30; 37; Exodus 3; 1 Samuel 16).

Jesus himself would pick up on this imagery later in his life, calling himself the Good Shepherd, the one who cares for his people so faithfully that he would even die for them (John 10).

All of that imagery is hinted at in the short vignette from Luke 2—the famous story that many of us can only hear in a Linus voice! When the angel appeared to shepherds, he brought “good news of great joy,” not just for Israel, but for “all people” (Luke 2:10). God had come to earth to stay. He was coming as king—promising justice and peace—as well as savior—promising redemption and forgiveness (Luke 2:11).

But the story doesn’t end with the shepherds *receiving* this news. It ends with them *sharing* this news. After they rushed to the stable, the shepherds “returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen” (Luke 2:20).

Throughout the Bible, God has always been pursuing his people, like a faithful shepherd looking for his wayward sheep. At Christmas, we celebrate the beginning of that Shepherd’s earthly life. And like the first shepherds, we respond to God’s presence by telling everyone we know about it.

Christmas will be over in a flash, but the best part of Christmas lasts forever: Jesus is still with us. His Spirit is in you and in me. God is with us. Even when it’s hard, even when we feel alone, even when it’s not Christmas, God is with us.

And he will be forever.

Discuss

1. How does your heart respond to the image of God, the Shepherd, gently caring for you, his sheep?
2. What would be different if you truly believed God was with you? (Remember: In Christ, he is!)
3. Who is God leading you to tell about the good news of Jesus?