

Luke 2: 8-20 (ESV) – The Angels' Song

Main point: Go and see; be at peace.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.



Background: This is the third of four ancient “advent hymns” from Luke’s gospel story of Jesus’ birth, according to Christian tradition:

1. Mary’s Magnificat
2. Zechariah’s blessing after the birth of his son, John the Baptist
3. the Angels’ “Gloria in excelsis”
4. Song of Simeon

Focus of study:

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to the shepherds, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and 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 among those with whom God is pleased!”

¹⁵ When the angels went away from the shepherds 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.” ¹⁶ And the shepherds went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when the shepherds saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ... ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Questions:

1. *Here we have some shepherds out in a field. What do you think shepherds were like back in ancient days? What was their job? Nice, cushy desk job?*
 - a. No social standing; one of the lowest classes; menial, manual labor
 - b. Probably not very clean or “presentable”
 - c. Their job was to watch the sheep, 24 hours a day. To protect them from predators and thieves. Slept out in the field.
2. *I wonder if you’re surprised that these shepherds are the people that first heard about Jesus’ birth? Why might it be surprising? Who do you think might typically be people who would be given important news?*
 - a. The shepherds are not “important” people! Just lowly workers, not kings or priests.
3. *What happens on this particular night? I wonder what that would have been like??*
 - a. Angels appear! Scary, unexpected, incredible, crazy; “the glory of the Lord shone around them” – describe this!
 - b. v. 9: *How did the shepherds react?*
 - i. they were filled with fear

4. *What are the first words that the angel says? Why do you think this was the first thing?*
 - a. v. 10: "Fear not" – to reassure them. A visit from an angel might be seen as terrifying; they could be thinking, "what did we do now??"
 - b. "For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people." – *What are the "big" words here? To whom does this message apply?*
 - i. ALL, even these lowly shepherds.
 - c. Then the angel finishes the message [read it] "¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." *So what is the message from the angel?*
 - i. The birth of a savior, the Christ; and the shepherds will know him when they see him.
5. *What happens right after the angel gives this message?*
 - a. Almost like the heavens can't contain themselves! *Suddenly* a whole host of angels burst into song – wow! *I wonder what that was like! If one angel terrified them, what must this have done to them??*
6. *What are the two parts to the song that the angels sing?*
 - a. v. 14: Glory to God in the highest
 - b. and on Earth peace among those with whom God is pleased
 - i. *I wonder what this message says to you? What tone does this message have? What is the main piece of news?*
 1. *Glory*: God of the universe is doing something new and amazing here on Earth
 2. And the primary message for humans is *peace*.
7. *Why peace? Between who?*
 - a. Christ's mission: to bring peace between us and God, and between fellow human beings, breaking down dividing walls.
8. *After the shepherds get this message from the angels, what do they do?*
 - a. Leave their job, rush to Bethlehem, find the baby and family
 - b. Tell other people – "made known"
 - c. Return to their "regular" lives, praising God.
9. *Do you think the shepherds were changed after this? How?*

When we see Jesus personally, with the eyes of our heart, we can be at *peace* – and we can tell others. It changes us forever.

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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