

SHEPHERDS BELIEVED*

The Shepherds responded in faith to the message of the angels. They sought and found Him.

SCRIPTURE†

Luke 2:8-20

MUSIC‡

Angels We Have Heard on High
Go Tell It on the Mountain
Silent Night, Holy Night
The First Noel

The First Noel (Forrest) SATB

What Child Is This

While Shepherds Watched... (Forrest) SATB

Who Is He in Yonder Stall



Artwork from the James Tissot Collection (Brooklyn Museum). FreeBibleImages.org

* Theme is **third** in the **Advent** Christmas worship series.

† Daily preparatory readings shown in **bold**.

‡ Published choral and vocal music shown in **bold**.

PRESENTING & PROMOTING THIS THEME

BLUE-COLLAR BOYS

Luke 2:8-18 | *What were the shepherds like? Today's parallel is a teen guy doing yard work. (Pick a few older teens out and have them stand.) The shepherds had an eager response. They dropped their responsibilities and ran to see. The sheep had been the most important thing in their life, until this happened. This new thing became the most important. After they saw the Messiah, they eagerly proclaimed it. The shepherds had a simple, enthusiastic faith.*

Promotional Post: When we step into the culture of first-century Judea, the shepherds of the Christmas story look more like teen guys doing lawncare than noble heroes. Yet in their response to the angelic message, we see a lesson. As they did, we worship Christ this Sunday. Prepare for worship if you wish with the short account of these men: Luke 2:8-18.

FIRST TO THE LOWLY

Note the lowliness of the shepherds as an indication of the reach of the gospel.

The virgin Mary, as she meditated on the news from Gabriel that she would bear the Son of God, responded with these words: “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.” (Luke 1:52).

Today we focus on a different aspect of Jesus’ birth. When God sent His Son into the world, His coming was announced by a host of angels—this, we might have expected. But it was announced to an unlikely audience. We know the story well...

“And there 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’” (Luke 2:8-11).

Have you ever thought it odd that God the Father would announce the coming of His Son to the blue-collar workers of Bethlehem? Shepherds were not untouchables in Jewish society; but neither were they the C.E.O.’s, the financial managers, or the college professors. They were the cashiers, the table-waiters, the window-washers of their day. We might have expected God would announce Messiah to the scribes in the Temple, or the Jews’ current king, or the Sanhedrin who provided political and spiritual oversight to the Jewish people.

But, no. God’s message of peace and goodwill came first to the lowly. Messiah was announced to everyday people. And aren’t you glad? No one deserves Jesus. But God offers His Son as a gift

to anyone who will believe—be they rich or poor, well known or forgotten. Praise our Lord that He announced the coming of His Son to the lowly, and that the gift of eternal life is for ordinary people! (Caleb French)

ORDINARY, EAGER PEOPLE

The shepherds who received the angels' message were not the privileged among society; they were simply lowly, ordinary people doing an ordinary job. Yet they probably looked back on this experience as a defining moment in their lives. We can tell by their response that it meant a great deal to them: they immediately went to the stable to worship. We could even say that they ran to Jesus, exuding a contagious joy. They told everyone they met about the Child, and they gave the glory and praise to God. Though, in our eyes at least, they were unexpected worshippers, they model for us a response to His coming that we would do well to imitate.

Have you experienced a defining moment in your life? Maybe a decision you made, an idea that altered your thinking, or a circumstance that God brought into your life has changed you significantly. Many of us can probably look back and pinpoint such a moment in our own experience. And when we read about the lives of others, we often recognize these turning points as well. In Luke 2, we read a brief narrative about the shepherds who received the angels' message announcing Jesus' birth.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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!"

These men were not the privileged among society; they were simply lowly, ordinary people doing an ordinary job. It's not difficult to imagine that the shepherds looked back on this experience as a defining moment in their lives.

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

We can tell by the shepherds' response that the announcement of Jesus' birth meant a great deal to them: they immediately went to the stable to worship. We could even say that they *ran* to Jesus, exuding a contagious joy.

Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

The shepherds didn't keep the good news to themselves. In fact, they told everyone they met about the Child, and they gave the glory and praise to God. Though, in our eyes at least, they were unexpected worshipers, they model for us a response to His coming that we would do well to imitate. (Amy Tilson)



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