

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Beyond Expectations” (from the Advent sermon series)

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of Luke, we find we find several shepherds in the fields watching over their flocks, beginning in verse 8. During this time period, shepherds were not considered people of high status in society and were often viewed by the upper class as dirty and dangerous people. This is contrary to what a few Biblical stories represent them as, such as Moses and David.
- In verses 9-14, there appeared an angel of the Lord “...and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they [shepherds] were terrified.” The angel said to the shepherds: “Do not be afraid; for see-I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”
- In verse 12, the angels indicate a sign for the shepherds to look for. The Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible (NRSV) commentary explains, “Prophets sometimes offered signs from God to confirm their message (e.g., Ezekiel 4:3; perhaps especially relevant in this context is Isaiah 7:14).
- In verses 15-20, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see the Baby Jesus, which the angels had told them to do. This obedience is in contrast with the religious leaders of the time that had heard the news but did not travel to see for themselves (Matthew 2:5). When they found the child, “they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.”
- In verse 19, Mary “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” In other words, she reflected on this most holy and joyous event. We also find Mary pondering and taking to heart other events in chapter 2 in Luke (See Luke 2:34-35, 51).
- In verse 20, we conclude with, “The shepherds returned [to their fields outside of Bethlehem], glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” This is similar to what the angels had done previously in verses 13-14.

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Today's sermon can be broken down into three parts: (1) Incarnational Glory; (2) Glorious Transformation; and (3) Glorify.
- Part I-Incarnational Glory: Today's reading is from the Book of Luke, known as the "Nativity narrative." This begins with an imperial decree by the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, announcing "that all the world should be registered" (Luke 2:1).
- This narrative in Luke begins during a dark time in history with the world suffering at the hands of tyrants like Caesar Augustus and King Herod. It also begins with shepherds living in the fields watching over their flock when an angel appeared to them.
- "Shepherding was a low class, poorest of the poor profession. Historically, shepherds were cast as liars, degenerates, and thieves, living on the fringes of society." -Bishop Craig Satterlee.
- The Gospel of Luke differentiates from the other Gospels through his attention to the concern of the "least of these." Those who are considered marginalized are given voice, image and presence in Luke's Gospel account. The historical inclusion of the shepherds is significant, in that they were the first to be visited. Those whom God wishes to see first, are those who are often the last to be seen or noticed at all.
- Luke 2:9, 13-14. Think about this interaction between the angel and the shepherds. (*Please listen from the 31:45-minute mark to 33:15 into the sermon to poetically explore this interaction).
- This is the beauty of Christmas, the power of the Incarnation. We believe that God so desires to know us, that God comes to earth to be with us. Immanuel: God with us.
- Glory sighting: a moment when God has shown up for you at a time in your life.
- Part II-Glorious Transformation: the purpose of God's glory is to transform our lives. The night the shepherds were filled with God's glory, their lives were transformed. They experience God in the manger and then go forth and glorify and praise God. They go and share the Good News to all people. They become instruments of praise.
- Part III-Glorify: when we look into the eyes of Christ, we too become transformed. From the poem "The First Coming" by Madeleine L'Engle: "We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice, for to share our grief, to touch our pain, He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!"
- When we *glorify*, we re-gift *God's glory* to the world! Hark! the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Read both Matthew 1:18-2:23 and Luke 1:26-2:21. How do these two accounts of Jesus' birth differ? How does this help us to better understand the life and ministry of Jesus Christ?
- In what ways has the gift of Jesus been "good news" and great joy in your life?
- In thinking about the idea of God desiring to know us and be with us, reflect on how God has shown up for you in your life.
- Reflect on a time when you experienced a "glory sighting" in your life. How did God show up for you?
- In what ways has your life been *transformed* by the love and glory of God? How can we take this and share it with others?
- How can we *glorify* God in our lives?



NOTES

[illegible]