



# “Spread the Word”

Luke 2:8-20

[based on the sermon preached on 25.12.22 – available on the [church app](#) or at <https://lwac.org.au/sermons>]

## KEY IDEAS

1. Some shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem are the first to hear the message of the child Jesus as Savior, Messiah and Lord, direct from an angel.
2. The shepherds eagerly respond to the proclamation of the angel and go to Bethlehem to check it out, to find this child whom the angel declared to be God in the flesh
3. Upon finding the child, the shepherds retell the account of the angel appearing and the angel’s proclamation. They spread the word about the child and what had been said to them.
4. The shepherds were filled with joy as they glorified and praised God for all that they had heard and seen.

## CONNECT

- Have you ever been told something which seemed at the time unbelievable or incredible? (It could have been either good news or sad news.) How did you get past your disbelief? How much did the credibility of the reporter or messenger contribute to your believing the news? Did it take you long to accept the news, or were you able to do so quickly? Share about this as you are able.

## STUDY

### Read Luke 2:8-12

- The text gives us no dates or season for Jesus’ birth. However, some biblical scholars interpret the statement that the shepherds were out in the fields with their flocks to mean that it was a certain time of year, but this is speculative. Ultimately, we just don’t know what season or time of year Jesus was born. Why do you suppose Luke (and Matthew) did not consider this important? Luke mentions the census decree from Augustus in Luke 2:1-2, but no actual date or season. Why?

- The first messenger from God was a single angel. What was the response of the shepherds? How do we know this from what the angel said? What was it about the angel which made the Shepherds afraid, even before the angel spoke?
- Is this response of the shepherds typical when meeting an angel? (See Judges 6:22-23 and Judges 13:21-22, but also Acts 12:5-11.) What do you suppose it was about the angel which appeared to the shepherds which was so frightening? Why didn't the angel which led Peter out of prison in Acts 12 have the same effect on Peter?
- Put into your own words what is this "good news which will cause great joy" of which the angel spoke.
- Is there any significance to the statement of the angel that this good news would be for "all the people" rather than just the Israelites? If so, what is that significance? If not, why not?
- What is the city or town of David? Why is it called that?
- What does the angel's description of what the child would be wrapped in and where they would find him indicate about the socio-economic status of the parents of Jesus? Were "cloths" and "mangers" indicative of affluence or simpleness and lowliness?
- In v. 11 the angel identifies three distinct identities (or titles) of the child the shepherds would find: Savior, Messiah (Anointed One) and Lord. What does each of these mean? How are they different?

### **Read Luke 2:13-14**

- How do you think the shepherd's grappled with the announcement that the child they would find in the nearby manger was, in fact, God (the Lord)? Does the obvious comprehension struggle this would produce help explain the multitude or great company of the heavenly host which appeared? How might seeing this multitude of heavenly beings overcome any doubts the shepherds might have had about whether the baby they would find was really God?
- The proclamation of the heavenly host is two-fold. One is their praise in declaring "Glory to God in the highest heaven." The other is their declaration of "peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests." This latter is a rather profound and complex statement. What exactly is this "peace" of God to which the angels refer? Is it peace between God and man, between man and man, or both (peace between man and man which is only possible because of the prior peace between God and man which Jesus purchases by his death and resurrection)? And who are those "on whom his favor rests?" All mankind or only those who respond favourably to Jesus? What do you think?

## Read Luke 2:15-20

- Note that the shepherds decide to go into Bethlehem and check it out not to see if it was true, but because they already believed it to be true. (Seeing a night sky full of angels is pretty strong confirmation.)
- Why do you think God chose to give this first message to common shepherds rather than King Herod or the Jewish religious leaders? What might this indicate about who this message and reality is for?
- As Bethlehem was a small town of just a few hundred people with only a few mangers or stables, and the shepherds were only a short distance away, they probably had no problem at all in finding the child and his mother. Try to imagine what the conditions might have been like for Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. Mangers are not necessarily feeding troughs but structures where animals eat, like stables. List as many things as you can think of which might have been in the stable that night, with which they had to contend.
- The response of the shepherds was to spread the word about what they had seen and heard regarding the child. So they told everyone they met about the visit from the angel, what the angel had said about the child they would find, the company of the heavenly host, and finding the child just as the angel had said. They were not shy or discriminating; they excitedly told everyone.
- But Mary's response was different, the text tells us she treasured these things in her heart, she pondered them. This means she thought deeply about them. Put yourself in Mary's shoes. What do you suppose were some of Mary's thoughts concerning all this? Do you think she was excited for her son's future? Do you think she even now might have been worried about his future, wondering how and whether people would accept him? Do you think she had any inkling of what it was Jesus had come to do, what was God's purpose in sending him?

## APPLY

- Admittedly we live in a different religious and spiritual situation than the shepherds. Our society is not looking expectantly for a savior; our society does not have a common understanding and idea of God; our society does not have a common belief in angels and a desire for God to act in the world for the good of mankind, all of which Israel did in Jesus' day. All of these beliefs and realities in Israel at Jesus' birth made the shepherds' spreading the word about Jesus to everyone much easier.
- Even so, how can we follow the lead of the shepherds to spread the word? Who do you know who needs to hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ? Whose life

needs peace, as the angel declared? Think of one or more people whom you know - they could be a family member, friend or co-worker - who needs to hear the good news of Jesus Christ as Savior, Messiah and Lord. Pray for God to provide the opportunity for you to share the gospel and the courage for you to share when that opportunity arises.

- When you share, a good, simple way to do so is to tell them of God's great love for them, that Jesus came to live and die and be resurrected to pay the penalty for their sin and overcome death, and that they simply need to place their hope and trust in Jesus and begin to follow him. Sharing how you trusted Christ as savior and Lord and the difference that has made in your life can also help make it personal and real.
- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?
- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.
  - 1.
  - 2.

## **PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER**

- According to need.