

Go and Tell

Luke 2:8-20

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December 15, 2024

We are looking in this series at the different ways people responded to the Christmas message when it was first delivered to them all those years ago and hopefully being challenged and encouraged to respond in much the same way! We first looked at:

- Mary and Joseph and characterized their response in the words – “trust and obey”. Mary said, “be it to me according to your word” and it is said that as soon as Joseph awoke from a dream informing him that all that was happening was from God, “he did as he was commanded.” – it was a response to trust and obey.
- Last week, we looked at how the angels and saw their response to the Christmas message was one of praise and worship! We saw the heavenly curtain pulled back and entire host of angels praising God and was challenged that this should be our response as well. We are to praise and worship – “Glory to God in the highest” – the song of the angels for bringing peace to this world in the person of Christ.

This week, we are going to look at the response of the shepherds who were watching over their sheep that night in Bethlehem when the angels delivered the message of good news to them.

I’m calling the message today: **Go and Tell**

Luke 2:8-20 – “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 them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

¹⁰ 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. 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 he is pleased!” ¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God (now, check this...here it is!) for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

It’s amazing to me that after Mary and Joseph, the VERY first people to be informed regarding the birth of the Messiah are shepherds...AND not only are they the first to be told about the birth

of Jesus, but they are also the first to tell others about his birth!

Incredible! The good news that Jesus was born - think of it!

- It wasn't first announced to power brokers in the political capital of the world at the time, Rome...
- It wasn't first announced to the sophisticated in the intellectual capital of the world at the time, Athens...
- It wasn't even first announced to the religious in the spiritual capital of the world at the time, Jerusalem...

Instead...the very first announcement that the Savior was born came to some lowly shepherds on the backside of nowhere – the city of Bethlehem.

Now, I LOVE taking our trips to the Holy Land and can't wait until we start going back.

One of my favorite places to go is Bethlehem. It's always a toss-up on whether we can get into the city simply because it's in a Palestinian controlled area and our guides know the temperature of what's going on at a given time...obviously, we are not going to put any of our groups in harm's way, and so sometimes we can't go in.

But, when we do get to go, we'll take our groups to The Church of the Nativity, and it's a great site to visit – it's the traditional birth place of Jesus, but there's been a church built on top of it and it's difficult to really appreciate Jesus being born in a stone manger when it's been decorated elaborately and pretty gaudy by the orthodox church.

We usually lead trips the day after Christmas, and so all of the Christmas decorations are up in the city in and around the church, but then we go to the shepherd fields!

And when you go out to the shepherd fields – there are not any decorations out there. There's no church built on the shepherd's fields...they were left just the way they were for the most part 2,000 years ago, and it's just amazing to be there.

It's the countryside...and it's NOT hard to imagine what it would have been like to be a shepherd watching over the sheep by night.

Illus. Bethlehem pics – I brought some pics to show you of the shepherd fields and some of the caves that you can go into to see where shepherds would have gathered with their flocks when there was rain or extremely cold weather.

Now, to fully understand and appreciate the response of the shepherds to “go and tell” of this good news they received let's consider why it's so impactful that the message was delivered to them first before anyone else.

First of all, shepherds in the days of Jesus did not have a very good reputation...this wasn't a job that you sought out for the most part. Shepherds were considered vagrants...they were outcasts...they were no names!

They were of the lowest class in the culture in which they resided. They had bad reputations and were looked upon by many as thieves because they would allow their flocks to graze on other people's property.

Listen to how commentator, **Leon Morris** put it: **“The nature of their calling kept them from observing ceremonial law which meant so much to religious people. More regrettable was their unfortunate habit of confusing ‘mine’ with ‘thine’ as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law—courts.”**

In fact, the Talmud which is commentary by various Jewish rabbis on all kinds of subjects including ceremonial and civil law states, and I quote: **“Give no help to a heathen or to a shepherd.”**

These are the guys that when you were picking teams growing up, they were always the last one left!

And yet the message of good news...that a Savior has been born comes to them **FIRST!** What a sign of the grace of God **AND** that God means it when he says, “I've got good news of great joy for **ALL THE PEOPLE!**”

God is showing in **WHO** the message comes to (the shepherds) that he means business! This good news is for **ALL** the people – that includes:

- The poor...
- The outcast...
- The broken...
- The neglected...
- The non-religious...
- The powerless...
- The weak...

It includes the people you don't think for a moment it would include, and God proves it by giving the message first to the shepherds!

And hear this because this is a **GREAT** point to make and underscore today...this is something for all of us to remember and that's the fact that we are not at all that different from the shepherds!

God **GLORIES** in delivering this good news message to no-names! When you think about...that's kind of the way God rolls! It's what makes his grace so special...so amazing!

Start with the disciples! His salvation call was rejected by the elite...by the super-power and uber religious! They weren't going to bend the knee to a peasant from Galilee – his followers were no name fisherman for the most part...a tax collector and a zealot – THIS is who Jesus came after and called to follow him.

Just look around the room today – NOT a one of us in here has arrived...are super special! We're a bunch of no names and yet God in his grace allowed us to hear the good news and respond to it!

As Paul wrote in **1 Cor. 1:26-29** – **“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;**

²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

The shepherds are proof that God is NOT impressed by our last name, our worldly reputation, our resume, or our pedigree. He takes the foolishness of the world...the weak...and despised and he says THAT'S who gets to hear my message.

And these shepherds, they hear the message from the angel– that's (v. 10) and that's important! Take note the HEAR the good news.

Their response to the good news starts with “Go and see” ...and it leads to “go and tell!” Look at it!

Luke 2:15-16 – **“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.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.”**

Watch the process. The shepherds HEAR the good news...they go and SEE “this thing that has happened” – they found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger – and it's at THIS point they become witnesses!

By definition, this is what a witness is! I'll put it on the screen for you...the definition of a witness!

witness - someone who testifies to what they have seen, heard, and experienced.

The shepherds heard the message – good news is here! They saw the baby lying in a manger just as it was announced and THEN they went and told everyone!

Luke 2:17-18 – **“And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told**

them concerning the child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.”

The shepherds were the first to know about the birth of Christ AND they were the first to share the good news about the birth of Christ – first to know and first to tell!

R.C. Sproul (author and theologian) – “...the shepherds became the first evangelists on the Christian church. Their testimony, although worthless in the law of the courts of the day, was valued by God. He entrusted to them the first human proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They heard the gospel; they came to Christ; they saw, believed and proclaimed.”

When I was writing this sermon and thinking of the theme of “go and tell” I couldn’t help but think of – especially this time of the year...I couldn’t help but think of the song we sing at Christmas, *Go Tell It on The Mountain*

The truth is, we don’t know where this song came from...we don’t know who wrote it. It was originally put forward as an African American spiritual...and like most spirituals, they were passed down orally and differed from plantation to plantation.

From all the research I could do, a man by the name of John Wesley Work Jr (**SHOW IMAGE**) – he was the son of a church choir director and he had a great love for music.

By all accounts, he was a brilliant man earning his masters in Latin and actually taught Latin and Greek at Fisk University in Nashville and later became President of Roger Williams University.

While at Fisk in order to help raise funds for the university, Wesley Work Jr. started a 10-member ensemble. And they would travel the country putting on concerts with their program consisting mainly of spirituals that people were not familiar with or that had never been heard.

One article I read, credited the Fisk ensemble with “keeping the Negro spiritual alive”. They were historically never sung in public and here is this university touring the country performing them in front of black and white audiences.

As a result, the Fisk ensemble earned an international reputation AND one of the spirituals the popularized was, *Go Tell It on The Mountain*.

Listen to the lyrics!

**Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.**

**While shepherds kept their watching
Over silent flocks by night**

**Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a holy light.**

**The shepherds feared and trembled,
When lo! Above the earth,
Rang out the angels' chorus
That hailed the Savior's birth.**

**Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn.**

**Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.**

The point of hearing what we hear...and seeing what we see...and experiencing what we experience is to tell others about it! On the mountain...over the hills...and everywhere! And that's exactly what the shepherds did.

Three aspects of their witness I want to highlight and in doing so, I want to encourage and challenge us to respond in the same way.

1. We share what we know

This is what the shepherds did. They didn't have all the answers...they didn't have everything figured out, but they shared what they knew! They shared what they had heard, seen, and experienced!

You know, sometimes we are not effective witnesses for Jesus because we think if we share, we might get asked a question that we don't know the answer to...and sometimes this prevents us from being a witness for Jesus.

We think, I can't tell someone about Jesus because I don't know my Bible that well...I don't have my theology degree...I've only been a Christian for a small amount of time...

Hey...the shepherds BLOW those excuses out of the water! They were like the disciples – untrained, unschooled men...they didn't have all the answers and yet they were incredible effective witnesses because they made the decision to share what they knew!

They heard the good news...they saw the good news...AND so they shared the good news.

And let me just say this! If you have heard the good news...and you have received the good news...then you know enough to pass that good news on!

Good news is meant to be shared! The Bible says in:

Prov. 25:25 – “Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a far country.”

To know that God has sent a Savior...that the Messiah is here...that the sovereign Lord of the universe has come to earth – that is good news that is meant to be proclaimed.

And here’s the thing. You know what’s amazing. The shepherds saw Jesus in the cradle and proclaimed that as good news. We have the privilege of seeing Jesus in the pages of scripture not just lying in a cradle, but seeing him grow up and being nailed to the cross.

We KNOW by faith that Jesus died for our sins...we KNOW that he was raised on the third day!

We’ve got better news to share than the shepherds did that day – and I just wonder are we responding like they did and telling everyone we know that Christ wasn’t just born, but that he died and rose again?!

We are his witnesses and our job is to testify to what we have heard, seen, and experienced.

We have a responsibility to share what we know – AND if you have been saved, you know MORE than enough to share with someone who doesn’t know the good news...who isn’t aware of gospel message.

I love how the NIV translates (v. 17). It translates “they made known the saying” as “they spread the word”.

? – Are you spreading the word? THIS is the call of gospel!

Acts 1:8 – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

As witnesses we are to share what we know...and practically speaking just start with your testimony! Start with how Jesus changed your life – no one can dispute your testimony!

Share what you know. Secondly:

2. We share with a sense of urgency

I love how after hearing the good news, the shepherds (v. 16) “went with haste” to see if what they heard was reality...and it was!

And when they saw it (v. 17), “they made known the saying...” In other words, they didn’t hold back...they didn’t wait...they didn’t hesitate. They saw Jesus and they spread the word.

It was instantaneous...it was with a sense of urgency!

Again, this is good news! The word “good news” is where we get the word “gospel” from.

This word in our New Testament was a familiar word because when a King or country would go to battle and a war was fought and won, they would send someone to “herald the good news” – they wanted word out that the king had won...the war is over!

You didn’t sit on this god news...instead you shared it with a sense of urgency! People need to know what has happened!

This IS the gospel! We share this “good news” with a sense of urgency because people need to that there is a God who loves them...people need to know there is a God who can forgive them...give their life meaning and purpose.

The scripture says in **2 Cor. 6:2b** – “...Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Illus. Christmas Spectacular – I can tell you when I or Pastor Ramon share the good news, there is a sense of urgency in our heart and our favorite part of the service is seeing those lights come up all over the room! We get to see it after every show! (**SHOW PICS**)

We share with a sense of urgency because eternity is in the balance...even right now, I hope you can hear it in my voice, you are NOT guaranteed tomorrow! The voice saying, “you can put this off...do that later...is NOT the voice of God!”

The voice of God is the still, small voice whispering in your spirit, “Don’t put this off any longer! Today is the day of salvation.” Don’t put off the most important decision you will ever make!

As witnesses:

1. We share what we know
2. We share with a sense of urgency

And listen who cares what people think of us? Sometimes we are not effective witnesses NOT just because we’re scared, we may not have the answers to the questions someone asks us...sometimes we don’t share the good news because we’re worried what people will think of us if we witness to them!

And again, I ask, “Who cares what people think?” We need to care more about what God thinks of us!

Now, I’m not saying be weird...don’t be a turn-off to people. But look, as witnesses to what we have seen and heard – to lost people, we’re going to be seen as a bit different!

Illus. Elf movie – Make me think of the Christmas classic, Elf movie...you know Buddy the Elf!

Here is this elf that leaves on a mission from the North Pole to the big city of New York. To most, Buddy seems out of place...all this talk of Santa and the North Pole makes him sound crazy to the outside world.

But you know what? Buddy doesn't care! You know why? BECAUSE...he KNOWS what he has seen...he KNOWS what he has heard...he KNOWS what he has experienced...

And it doesn't matter how silly he seems to be to the outside world...he is simply a witness to what he KNOWS to be true!

It reminds me of John's words in:

1 John 1:1-3 – “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

How crazy this world must think we are...and this news we share with them?!

- You believe that a virgin, impregnated by the Holy Spirit, conceived the child of God?
- You, Christians believe that child grew up and lived a perfect life? He never had one sinful thought...never participated in one sinful deed?
- And for that perfect life, he was sentenced to an execution and died as a sacrifice and substitute for people's sins?
- THEN after he was dead for three days, his heart started beating again and he was raised to life?
- AND you all actually believe that just as he ascended into heaven, he is going to visibly, physically return to earth one day and judge the living and the dead?

To the world, it sounds like we're nuts! Add on top of that that we have never seen Jesus with our physical eyes...we have never heard him speak audibly into our ears.

BUT, we have experienced his saving grace! We know it...we are certain of it! And therefore we don't have to worry about what people will do to us or fear what people will think of us.

We are simply called to be witnesses for Jesus and filled with his power, we will confidently proclaim his message of hope to others.

1. We share what we know

2. We share with a sense of urgency
3. **We share with as many people as possible**

This good news of great joy is “FOR ALL THE PEOPLE”. We share it with the “up and out” and we share this good news with the “down and out” – it is FOR ALL PEOPLE – NONE are excluded!

? – Are you hearing this? There is NO ONE that has out-sinned the grace of God. There is NO ONE that has run too far...done too much evil...that God’s love and forgiveness doesn’t reach down and can’t save.

And if you think this news is too good to be true...think again. This is what makes it good news...is that it’s for sinners like me and you!

And so, we share this good news with as many people that we can.

Champion Forest, I’m asking the Lord to burn this desire in our hearts. That we will be committed as NEVER before to share this message with as many people as possible – are you ready for this? - REGARDLESS of the cost!

I don’t know what that fully means yet, but I believe God is preparing us for something great – to whom much is given, much is required...and we have been given much.

I’m asking you to pray with me for a burden to share this good news with as many people as possible regardless of what it costs and whatever that might mean.

Northwest Houston and beyond is a mission field...and I believe that like the shepherds, once we have seen and heard and experienced the good news – we have to share it with as many people as possible.

? – What about you? Have you received this good news so that you can share it with others.

It’s interesting - those that heard the message of the shepherds...the Bible says (v. 18) – “all who heard it wondered”.

It’s one thing to “wonder” at the message...it’s something entirely different to believe it and embrace it by faith.

I like what commentator; **Kent Hughes** wrote in his commentary on this passage:

“The truth is, even if Christ were born in Bethlehem a thousand times but not within you, you would be eternally lost. The Christ who was born into the world must be born into your heart. Religious sentiment, even at Christmastime, without the living Christ is a yellow brick road to darkness.”

Don’t be like some who wonder at the message, but don’t believe it. Instead, let’s be like the

shepherds who heard, saw, and embraced the good news and their response was to share it with the world.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.