

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:

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 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.” ¹³And 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!”

¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ... ²⁰And 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 were shepherds like back then? What was their 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 are the people that first heard about Jesus’ birth? Why might it be surprising?*
 - a. 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: 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 – reassure them. A visit from an angel might be seen as terrifying, “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? Whom does it apply to?* ALL, even these lowly shepherds.
 - c. Finishes the message [read it] “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.”
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 he is pleased
 - i. *I wonder what this message says to you?* glory; God of the universe is doing something new and amazing here on earth; 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. *What do the shepherds do?*
- a. Leave their job, rush to Bethlehem, find the baby and family
 - b. Told other people – “made known”
 - c. Returned to their lives, praising God –
9. *Do you think they were changed after this? How?*

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

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