

# The Shepherds Find Christ

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Intro

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Read Luke 2:1-20

**The shepherds heard the Good News-** v10 *"...I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."*

- **Play 'identify the sound' game**
- **God speaks-** Our brains are amazing at working out what particular sounds are, but what are we like at distinguishing the voice of God? God speaks in many ways to us, here the shepherds have angels speaking to them on God's behalf, but God will speak through all sorts of ways such as creation, our conscience, the Bible, dreams, visions, God-incidents, fulfilled prophecy, healings and miracles, the person of His Son, preaching, friends sharing the good news, an act of love. Are we listening? How I came to become a Christian. What way might God be speaking to you right now, or trying to get your attention?
- **Good news-** The word 'gospel' means 'good news'. The angels were bringing the good news to the shepherds. The gospel is simply that God loves us and sent His Son Jesus to come to live a perfect life in our place and take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross. He promises that all who turn and put their trust in Him and what He has done will be forgiven by God and have eternal life in Heaven. What proof do we have of this? Jesus proved it by rising from the dead and ascending into Heaven. One day He shall return to judge everyone for how they have lived in this life. We all deserve to be punished for our sins (this is what Hell is), but Jesus took that punishment for us- this is good news- Heaven's door is now open for all who choose to receive this free gift!
- **Great joy-** As the angels said, the gospel brings great joy into people's lives when they realise how good the news is. One of the things you notice when you become a Christian is a new sense of hope, peace and joy in your life. God comes into our lives by His Spirit and fills us with amazing joy. Me at a service in St. Peters- looked into a mirror- had huge smile on face.
- **For all people-** The angels said that this good news wasn't for the select shepherds but for all people- that means you and me! Have we heard this wonderful good news?

**The shepherds came to Jesus-** v15 *"..Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us"*

- **Do 'optical illusions of Jesus' pictures**
- Seeking and finding Jesus is perhaps the single most important decision we will ever make in this life. The shepherds had received some great news, but now they had a choice to make: whether to respond to that news and come to Jesus or to simply ignore it. It was a good ending because they were able to verify that it was indeed all true- they weren't hallucinating after all! If we have heard the good news have we responded to it yet by coming ourselves to Jesus?
- **Priorities-** In our society the pace of life can be pretty hectic at times, there seems to be so much to cram into each day. However, it is not like this all over the world. I

was fortunate enough to go on holiday once with my parents to Barbados. It was wonderful, and a slower pace of life. Went into a supermarket and bought a few things, but had to wait ages for the person on the checkout to slowly put things through the till. Sometimes they would say to us 'hey whitey- where de fire?' because they could see that we found it hard to slow down. Some things are worth slowing down for- when someone has a heart condition they usually choose to make some changes to their lifestyle. Are you willing to make adjustments to your lifestyle because of your 'soul'-condition? Your relationship with your maker is the foundation of your life- it must take priority over everything else, and then all else will fit into place. Jesus said 'seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you'.

- **Putting off**- Often people hedge their bets thinking 'I will respond to God one day, but not now'. The Bible says 'Today is the day of salvation' and 'Today, if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts'. As the joke goes, 'I used to be indecisive but now I'm not so sure!' Sometimes it is better to make a wrong decision than no decision, as we can learn from our mistakes.
- **Relationship with God**- The best thing about the Christian life is the relationship with Jesus. This is what it is all about. Some people hear about that relationship and read about it but never come into it. God becomes your Heavenly Father, He gives you guidance and strength and power to live the right way. He will never leave you or forsake you. God loves you, and the good news is the invitation to come to Him for a lifetime relationship of adventure. Are you up for it? Have you responded to the invitation yet?

**The shepherds lived differently – v17-** *..they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this child*. **v20-** *Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.*

- **The change in the shepherds**- I wonder how the shepherds were at the start of their shift, counting their sheep and trying not to fall asleep. If they could have been filmed before and after their experience with the angels and meeting Jesus what a change we would have noticed! After their encounter they return praising God and also spreading the news of what happened.
- **Is faith personal?** There is a saying 'my faith is personal' – yes faith is personal, but that does not mean that faith is private, otherwise how can others get to hear the Good News? - The Bible says 'How than shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of who they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"
- **Confessing Jesus**- Jesus said 'whoever confesses me before men I will confess before my Father in Heaven, but whoever is ashamed of me before men I will be ashamed of before my Father in Heaven'. The shepherds chose the former lifestyle, which will we choose? Some people will do anything to hide their faith worried that they will lose friends if others find out they are a Christian. Is this true friendship? Surely true friends warn each other if they are in danger and share good news which will bless them. Surely also true friends respect differences in belief, if they do not share them? Maybe it's time to be courageous, take the plunge and confess Christ before others and see what happens.
- **Glorifying and praising God**- The other change in the shepherds was that afterwards it was natural for them to express their thanks and worship to God. They had begun a new lifestyle- one based on the worship of God. If someone was to

analyse your lifestyle outside of Church how much evidence would there be to identify you as a follower of Christ? The shepherds did not say 'right, now it is time for praise and worship' -it simply flowed out from them, due to their excitement. There are so many things we can do to grow as a Christian- being part of a Church, regularly reading the Bible, praying regularly, worshipping, sharing our faith etc. However, we need to be clear that these things do not qualify us for Heaven, or for favour with God- we are simply accepted and qualified because of the Good News. Let's do all the things which are part of Christian growth, but like the shepherds, let's do them out of the overflow of gratitude that God should love us enough to die for us so that we could live in Him.

### **Summary**

- They heard the Good News
- They came to Jesus
- They lived differently

### **Song**

*This Child*