

Remnant Life Church

December 2, 2018

Why Shepherds?

Luke 2:8-20

- We live in a world that thrives on notoriety
 - Facebook and YouTube have given a platform to the masses all striving for their 15 minutes of fame
 - There are also those who are categorized as YouTube sensations
 - Def: *An unemployed individual who dedicates most, if not all, of their free time to making YouTube videos of their cat doing adorable things instead of seeking gainful employment.*
 - It is said that a person's video goes viral meaning it may get as many as several million views
- Each of them are thinking, "You never know what might happen, or who might see this."
 - Of course, then we get one more person who is famous simply for being famous
- Some people and some events just naturally become famous
 - Hollywood produces famous people
 - So do professional sports
 - Politics
 - Even religion and large ministries
 - None of their fame makes one bit of difference in our lives
- But if there were ever a moment in history that there should have been worldwide fame and notoriety – surely it would have been the birth of God's Son, Jesus.
- Certainly, God had the resources to make that happen
 - All of creation at his disposal
 - And a countless number of angels to make the announcement
- I never studied marketing but what I do know is – make the announcement as big, as loud, and to the right people that you can.
 - Certainly, those in power would need to know
 - Royalty, the educated, and influential would be near the top of the list
 - People with money should be notified immediately in order to support things financially
 - Finally, make sure you select the biggest, busiest, most progressive and cosmopolitan location to kick things off
- And in the case of Jesus' birth this would be after ensuring that He was born into only the finest home with an impeccable reputation and pedigree to open all the right doors of opportunity for His future
- And Almighty God, at the birth of His one and only Son...did none of these
- In fact, it almost appears that He intentionally did the opposite of all the things He should have done that would guarantee the birth of His Son drew the most attention
 - The woman who would bear His Son was selected from a nondescript backwater town of Nazareth

- Located in the northern Galilee region of Israel
 - Little more than a stop on the way to Cana to the north or the Mediterranean Sea ports to the west
 - She was not from a particularly wealthy or influential family
 - And to top it all off she was, at least to the understanding of those who were from her town, a young woman of low moral standards as she became pregnant while engaged to another man
 - Perhaps the situation could be salvaged by letting the right people know what was about to happen...
- But no...shepherds! The first to receive the birth announcement of the Savior of the world were shepherds
- The first shepherd was Abel
 - He kept the flocks and brought the fat of the firstborn from his flock to God for his sacrifice
 - [Gen 4:2,4](#)
- Joseph's brothers were shepherds when they came to Egypt ([Gen 47:3](#))
 - Given the land of Goshen away from the Egyptians ([46:33-34](#))
 - The land they would occupy for over 400 years until freed from slavery
- Shepherds in Jesus' day
 - First, they were considered unclean
 - Not only physically but spiritually
 - Shepherding was not regarded as an honorable or desirable line of work
 - Their responsibilities did not allow them to participate in the feasts and holy days that were a central part of the Jewish life
 - While everyone else was going to Jerusalem for a feast celebration time, the shepherds were still in the fields watching their flock
 - They never left the sheep!
 - By day looking for new areas to graze and water to drink
 - By night fighting off predator animals or thieves
 - They would take turns on watch through the night while the others slept among the sheep (back to the first element of being unclean)
 - Second, they were looked on by people with suspicion as being untrustworthy
 - They were always on the move
 - They had a well-deserved reputation for thievery
 - When shepherds were at work near a town the people were always wary and extra protective of their possessions
 - Third, their word was not considered to be truthful
 - A shepherd's testimony was not considered valid
 - They could never act as a witness in a court of law
 - The Talmud, a collection of ancient writings on Jewish laws and customs stated, "No help should be given to heathen and shepherds."
 - Fourth, they were a rough and uneducated group of men
 - Most were illiterate and unrefined

- They were very low on the scale of society
 - They were basically viewed as outcasts of the community
- And so the announcement should have been made to...
 - ...the social elite
 - But God chose the cultural outcasts
 - ...the men of power and influence over the people
 - But the angels appeared to men who had no influence of men, only sheep
 - ...people of wealth and means to support the plan
 - But God sent word to those who had less than nothing – not even the sheep they tended belonged to them
 - Now if you were to identify one person who should have received the announcement it would have been Herod
 - He would have fit every category of the right person to tell
 - He was known as a ‘client king’ put in place by Rome
 - Raised a Jew as his father’s family converted to Judaism as Edomites (descendants of Esau)
 - But what was Herod’s response upon learning about the impending birth of the Messiah?

READ – Luke 2:8-20

- What can we learn from these shepherds who were the first to receive the Good News?
1. **They listened to the message**
 - a. It is the night shift (Luke 2:8)
 - b. Watching for the predators and thieves that would attack at night on the outskirts of the flock picking off strays
 - c. A sudden blindingly bright light terrified them (unlike anything they had seen before)
 - d. They did not run – they listened!
 - e. If they had not listened and had run away, they would have missed the single greatest event in all of human history up until that time
 - f. *Heb 2:1 We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*
 - i. A boat in a port or at sea
 - ii. There does not need to be a storm for that boat to drift away from the dock or off course if it is not tightly tied off or anchored
 - iii. God’s Word is our anchor
 - g. The danger of not listening to God in our lives is the ease with which we can drift away
 2. **They acted on what they had heard**
 - a. It was not enough that the shepherds had been told this great news, they had to act on it

- b. That is a central point of our lives as Christians today
- c. After the angels left, they probably looked at each other (“Did you guys just see what I think I just saw?”)
- d. They then had a decision that needed to be made
 - i. Conventional wisdom and common sense dictated they not abandon the sheep in the middle of the night
 - ii. There may be times when doing the right things does not make sense
- e. Why do we not act on more of what we know to be true?
 - i. Afraid of what others might say
 - ii. Afraid of looking foolish
 - iii. Afraid we may be wrong in what we think we need to do
 - iv. We get easily sidetracked by our own agendas
 - v. We become uncomfortable with the possible outcome
 - vi. **James 1:22-25** - *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

3. They celebrated with great joy

- a. They heard the message, they left their sheep, they found Jesus
 - b. They told everyone what had happened
 - c. Many times in Jesus ministry, after he had performed a miracle, He told the person to leave but not tell anyone what had happened.
 - d. That was not the case here
 - i. They did not just report what they had seen and experienced
 - ii. They were praising and glorifying God (**Luke 2:20**)
 - e. The word “praise” in this verse is also associated in meaning with a promise or vow
 - i. I believe the shepherds may have been the very first to have their lives and the hearts changed by Jesus
 - ii. They did not leave to simply report an event but to tell what had happened to them
 - iii. Their words of praise were a declaration of the promise that was being fulfilled
- God is not interested in the external things of our lives
 - Our definition of success and God’s favor and...
 - God’s definition are very different
 - God demonstrated this by selecting David over Eliab (Jesse’s oldest son) – **I Sam 16:6-7**
 - Jesus demonstrated it by selecting 12 of the least likely, least qualified, and least sensible men to be his disciples
 - And God demonstrates again by sending His angels to a group of social outcasts on a hillside to announce the birth of His Son

Whatever the hillside is that you live and work on, God has a task for you as well

The shepherds were used to spread the word of the birth of the child who would one day save the world from their sins

We have been selected, as His children, to spread the word that Jesus is still the answer for the world today