

The Cast of Christmas: The Shepherds

Psalm 8 ❖ Luke 2:8-20

"Surely on Christmas Eve, our hearts shall thrill to read again the great announcement of the angel to the shepherds in the field: 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.'"

This is supreme reality, though wrapped in supreme obscurity."

("Church Dogmatics," III/2, 479, Karl Barth)

Shepherds

The Bible contains many references to shepherds.

Moses and David were shepherds who were later called by God to lead His flock/people.

In John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep."

Shepherds in Jesus' day were rugged and poor.

Shepherds lived with their sheep 24/7/365 (Luke 2:8), and thus were unable to keep the Jewish ceremonial and dietary laws.

Shepherds in Israel led their flocks and protected their sheep.

What the Shepherds Saw and Heard

The "fields nearby" (that is, near Bethlehem) (Lk 2:8) are still used by shepherds; there are olive trees, patches of grass and beautiful flowers.

Like David, the Shepherd Poet and King, they must have marveled that the God who "made the heavens also made man a little lower than the angels and made him ruler over everything, including all flocks and herds" (Psalm 8:3, 6-7)

Luke tells us while these shepherds were "keeping watch one night, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified."

What did the angel say to them?

"Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel and began singing" (Lk 2:13). What did they sing?

The Shepherd's Response

"When the angels had left them and gone (back) into heaven," (Luke 2:15) what did the shepherds say to one another?

What five things did the shepherds then do? (Lk 2:16-17, 20)

- 1) They "hurried off"
- 2) They "found the baby"
- 3) They "spread the word about the Child"
- 4) They "returned,
- 5) glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

These shepherds, who were in charge of the flocks from which were chosen the lambs sacrificed in the Temple, were the first to see the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29).

The Shepherd's Challenge To Us

"Off to one side (in the stable) sits a group of shepherds, perhaps perplexed, perhaps in awe, no doubt in amazement.

Their night watch had been interrupted by an explosion of light from heaven and a symphony of angels.

God goes to those who have time to hear Him - so on this cloudless night He went to simple shepherds."

("The Arrival," Max Lucado)

This Christmas, will you make time to hear God?

