

Christmas Day 2016

Luke 2: 8-20

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angel said to them., "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 Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a babe wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger"

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying.

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on
whom His favour rests."*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they had seen Him they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things in her heart. The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard which were just as they had been told."

Just imagine if you can being one of those shepherds sitting quietly in the fields making sure the wolves weren't roaming around trying to catch the sheep. Perhaps it was your turn to get a couple of hours shut eye or to eat a little something for supper... and suddenly the glory of the Lord is shining all around you, night becomes day and it is so dazzling you have to shield your eyes. As if that isn't enough suddenly in the midst of it an angel appears and delivers the most amazing message to you about the Messiah/ Saviour having been born that night in the very town you are sitting on the hills nearby. And as if that doesn't blow you away completely there suddenly appears not one or two but a great company of the heavenly host praising God. Now we're not told the number but I'm guessing a great company is probably in the hundreds if not thousands. And they've all come to announce this amazing news to -the King and all his court? the Sanhedrin and all the Jewish leaders? the Roman prefect and all his noble entourage?

No to some lowly shepherds who were shunned by society as smelly and dirty and insignificant. Why? There's a sermon there but we're not going there this morning.

So what was this amazing message again? They may initially have been terrified but the angel calmed them down and reassured them he wasn't there to harm them but bring some fantastic news that God wanted to shout from the rooftops or at least the hill tops.

Yehusa, the Saviour, is born? The Messiah? Now? to us? Here in David's city? In a manger?

They could have questioned it but God put on a pretty convincing show to let them know it was real!

Their hearts embraced it all.

They somehow knew God would look after the sheep and moved as quickly as they could to the place where the angel had told them they would find the child. They arrived and sure enough they found Mary and Joseph and the baby in a manger just as the angel had told them. They were overcome with joy and couldn't contain the wonder and joy of it all. After leaving the manger they could not stop giving praise and glory to God for the amazing things they had heard and seen that night and shared their experiences with anyone who was around to listen and having heard they to were amazed. It may have been an exhausting night for Mary as those who heard also came to worship the new born Saviour, we're not told but I'm sure God would have strengthened her if it was so.

The breath taking, heart pounding excitement about the birth of Jesus Christ that the shepherds experienced, and wouldn't we have loved to have been there to share it?, was not only because

" A child had been born and a Son was given."

but that God was now present in human form. The God who dwelt in the Tabernacle and the Temple of Israel now dwelt among them.

Jesus Christ was everything God had to say to us;

He was all He wanted to be to us

and all He wanted to do for us.

Jesus was God become man.

The several eye witness accounts of the coming of Jesus Christ we have spoken about over the last two weeks as recorded in Scripture is a declaration of praise to each of us in this Christmas season.

Roy Lessin from DaySpring Devotions expresses this way:

Jesus came in a way that fulfilled so much;

Spoke in a way that taught so much;

Lived in a way that revealed so much;

Blessed in a way that gave so much;

Died in a way that provided so much;

Arose in a way that conquered so much;

Loved in a way that meant so much.

Thanks be to God as we celebrate the birth of His Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ at this special time that He, God, loved us enough to become flesh for us and die the most horrendous death in order that our relationship with Him, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit might be restored and that we now have the promise of eternal life if we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and repented of our past sins.

AMEN.