



LUKE 2:8-20

8 And there were *shepherds* living out in the fields near by, *keeping watch* over their *flocks* at night. **9** An *angel* of the Lord *appeared* to them, and the *glory of the Lord* shone *around them*, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the *people*. **11** *Today* in the *town of David* a Saviour has been born to you; he is the *Messiah*, the Lord. **12** This will be a *sign* to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a *manger*.'

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

14 'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth *peace* to those on whom his *favour rests*.'

15 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.'

16 So they hurried off and *found* Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they *spread the word* concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were *amazed* at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and *pondered* them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, *glorifying* and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

CLOSING PRAYER

written by Terry Hinks, from God's embrace

Jesus, you radiate what the world needs today:
Gentleness, tenderness, light and hope.
In you, may we find
gentleness as the answer to violence;
tenderness as the answer to ill-will;
light as the answer to lies;
hope as the answer to despair.
Amen

COMMENTARY

primary source: UBS Handbooks for New Testament

v.8 *shepherds*: despised, considered unreliable witnesses. **v.8** *keeping watch*: stay with, take care of. **v.8** *flocks*: Bethlehem is close to Jerusalem, so these might be the temple flocks, raised for sacrifice. **v.9** *angel*: mouthpiece, messenger of God. **v.9** *appeared*: suddenly, out of nowhere. **v.9** *glory of the Lord*: radiant light as God's visible presence (see Ex 16:10, 24:16, 40:34-35), signifying majesty, greatness. **v.9** *around them*: surrounded them. **v.10** *people*: a reference to the people of Israel, not people in general. **v.11** *today*: the day begins at sunset. **v.11** *town of David*: Bethlehem. **v.11** *Messiah*: God-anointed, God-promised, God-sent Saviour King. **v.12** *sign*: distinctive detail. **v.12** *manger*: feeding trough for animals. **v.13** *heavenly host*: heavenly army. **v.14** *peace*: the Roman world was experiencing a period of relative peace and economic prosperity known as the *Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace"), but the angels proclaimed a deeper, more lasting peace. **v.14** *favour rests*: bringing pleasure to God, see Luke 3:22. **v.16** *found*: implies a search. **v.17** *spread the word*: first to Mary and Joseph. **v.18** *amazed*: wondered at. **v.19** *pondered*: continually think about. **v.20** *glorifying*: to make big the precious quality of.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What caught your attention? Why?
2. Describe the story from the shepherd's perspective – thoughts, feelings, etc.
3. What do the shepherds learn about Jesus from the angels? How is that good news (v. 10)?
4. What is the significance of the manger (v. 12, 16)?
5. The shepherds go through this experience as a group. How is that significant?
6. Both shepherds and women were considered 'unreliable witnesses' in Jesus' day. Why do you think God choose them as primary witnesses to the birth and resurrection of Jesus?
7. Who are the despised in our society? Imagine God involving them in this story.
8. The shepherds receive and pass on the good news. How might we do the same?
9. **In Summary: How does this passage reflect the theme of 'light in the darkness'?**
10. What did you learn? What do you want to explore further?