

Joke: A shepherd is tending to his flock in a remote pasture. . .when suddenly a shiny red BMW appears. The driver a young man in an Armani suit, expensive shoes and polarized sunglasses sticks his head out the window and asks the shepherd, "Hey! If I can tell you how many sheep you have in your flock, will you give me one?"

The shepherd looks at him a bit confused but agrees to the deal. The driver plugs his cell phone into a laptop, connects it to a GPS and starts a remote body-heat scan of the area. During the process he sends some e-mails.

After receiving the answers, he prints a 50 page report on the portable printer in his glove box, and then proudly announces to the shepherd: "You have exactly 1,478 sheep."

To which the shepherd answers: "Impressive. You can choose one sheep out of my flock just as we agreed to."

He watches as the man picks up an animal and loads it into his car.

Then the shepherd says: "If I can tell you exactly what your business your in, will you give me back my animal?"

"You're on." the young man answers.

"You are a management consultant," says the shepherd promptly.

"That is an credible, how could you possibly guess that?" says the man, visibly surprised.

"It wasn't a guess," the shepherd replies. "You drive into my field uninvited. You want me to pay you for a piece of information I already know. You answer questions I haven't asked, and you know nothing about my business. Now give me back my dog."

Angels & Shepherds - Christmas 2024 week 4

I don't think the Christmas story would be the same without angels and shepherds. Some things just go together, but angels and shepherds. Do they really go together?

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Let me begin by saying this. . .I know Jesus is the reason for the season. And I also know that God didn't need the angels and shepherds to save the world. But let's be honest, the story just wouldn't be the same without the it would just be missing something. It would be like having a steak with no sides. We all know you need sides. But what really would be missing, well for starters this would. . .

Luke 2:8–16 (NIV): And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, 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 Savior 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 favor 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.

I mean, that is the Christmas story we all know and love. No matter if it is your grandpa reading it to the family, your pastor reading it to the church, or Linus sharing it with the Peanuts gang, that is the mashed potatoes and gravy of the story.

It is pretty amazing that angels and shepherds are both mentioned several times in the book of Genesis. However, the first time they find themselves on the same page is in Luke chapter 2. And what an amazing combination it is. . .

The holy, mighty, heavenly angels and the humble, lowly, earthly shepherds.

And the message that is shared by the angels to the shepherds, “a savior has been born”

It is the greatest message ever shared. However, there is also another message that is seen when the angels appear to the shepherds, and what is that message?

The message is that “the greatest message will be shared with the lowliest of people.”

God chose to bring the message to a group of people that were not in high regards, as a matter of fact they were considered low-status individuals in society during that time of history.

He could have sent an angel to a king, a priest, or a prophet. . .but he didn't. He sent them to shepherds. Why? God was showing us that salvation is not just for the socially acceptable, but to whosoever will.

And that grown-up baby Jesus would one day say, “Whatever you did to the least of these, you did it to me ”

1 Corinthians 1:26–28 (NLT): Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. 27 Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. 28 God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important.

On that first Christmas day, God wasn't just sharing with us, he was showing to us his heart and demonstrating what he wants our hearts to be like as well.

Not only that but to some degree, angels and shepherds are also a good representative of Jesus Christ.

Let's consider this about angels, shepherds, and Jesus.

1. The Messiah Was A Messenger

“Angelos” is the Greek word normally translated into English as “angel ”

Basically, angelos means “one who brings a message,” and it often refers to human messengers, and church just so you know we are called to bring the message of the good news to those around us. Amen.

And the biblical authors’ use of angelos when recounting angelic appearances implies that one of the main tasks of these supernatural creatures was to bring a message from on high.

While Jesus was not an angel, he was much more than that, he was a messenger from heaven. He said speaking of himself that a part of his purpose was to be a messenger of the good news.

Luke 4:16–22 (NIV): He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

Jesus said, “ God sent me to share the message of the good news.”

And Jesus was the greatest messenger proclaiming the greatest message.

When we think about Jesus as a messenger, we must consider the content of His message. He preached the Kingdom of God, calling for repentance and belief in the good news. His teachings were radical, challenging societal norms and inviting people from all walks of life into a transformative relationship with God.

He accepted the ones no one else wanted as well as those who everybody wanted to be around. He is no respecter of persons.

Jesus did not come to deliver a set of rules but to reveal the heart of God.

Hebrews 1:3 (NLT): The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

He emphasized love, mercy, and justice, often reaching out to those marginalized by society. He didn't push away but instead reached out to the ungodly, the sick, and the outcasts. To the point that even His disciples were sometimes surprised by who He came in contact with.

His message of hope reached across every barrier and demonstrated that everyone is worthy of God's love. It was for that very reason Jesus came so, that whosoever regardless of their past can experience the love, mercy, and grace of God.

Jesus remained faithful in His mission. He knew that His purpose was to fulfill the will of the Father, and He did so with humility and grace.

He exemplified what it means to be a servant leader. . .

Mark 10:45 (NIV): For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus wouldn't only be a messenger of the good news, he would be the subject of the good news.

And as followers of Christ, our response to Jesus as the messenger is crucial. We are called not only to hear His message but to live it out in our daily lives.

To be not only hearers of the word but doers also.

This means embracing His messages and allowing them to shape and transform our lives.

And in sharing the message of salvation, Jesus also would be pointing to something else and that is that. . .

2. The Savior Was A Shepherd

Many biblical figures were shepherds. Adam, the first shepherd, who cared for animals in the Garden of Eden. Abel, the first recorded shepherd in the Bible, and the second son of Adam and Eve. Abraham, cared for flocks, as did his descendants Isaac and Jacob.

Moses, tended the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro after fleeing Egypt.

David, was a shepherd of sheep as a boy and then would become a shepherd of God's people as the king of Israel.

Jesus would explain that he was not just a shepherd, but he was “ the good shepherd ”

In the video, Tommy mentions that shepherds did not have a glamorous life. That is an understatement. The life of a shepherd was incredibly challenging. Their entire job was to tend to the sheep.

And Jesus would demonstrate that life.

John 10:11–15 (NIV): 1 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Just as a shepherd knows each sheep by name, Jesus knows us intimately. He understands our fears, our struggles, and our deepest needs.

Just as a shepherd lays down their life for their sheep, Jesus would lay down his life for us.

Long before Jesus would come to the earth, the shepherd-king David would write Psalm 23.

In so doing, he would describe the heart of the good shepherd Jesus.

Let's look at that Psalm, but let's look at it with Jesus in mind.

Psalm 23:1–6 (ESV): The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

In these two Christmas characters, we see the message and the mission of that baby born in a manger. We see him in the holy and the lowly.

However, the true message of Christmas is the fact that the heavenly became human or, in other words: The Holy Became Lowly

Those holy angels and the lowly shepherds paint a picture of us once again.

For on that fateful night, heaven came down and mingled among us.

The Gospel of John paints the Christmas picture this way:

John 1:1–3 (NIV): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

And then skipping down to verse 14 we read. . . ,

John 1:14 (NIV): The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus, who was and is God, made the choice to humble himself being made in human likeness. That is, the holy one who created everything and who deserves all the praise and adoration of all creation, became someone much like us only without sin.

He would live here on earth, loving others and “ tending to” those the Father gave him. But this good shepherd, this holy messenger, would not only do that but also. . .

Philippians 2:8–11 (NIV): And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In other words, while the holy became lowly, he would not stay there. For the Father exalted him, not only to heaven, but the highest place and gave him the name above every other name.

And just like those lowly shepherds gathered on bended knees to worship Jesus at his birth, we, too must bend our knees in worship and prayer.

And just like those heavenly angels lifted their voices to proclaim Him, we, too need lift our voices and proclaim Him to those around us, go tell it in the mountain that Jesus Christ is born and give Him praise. Thank Him for all He has done and is still doing.

Prayer

Let’s remember Tuesday night we will come for Christmas Eve candle light service right here at 7 PM.

Show candlelight video invite