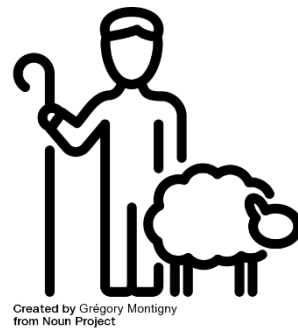


November 29, 2020
Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
Pastor Marvin Singh
Christmas: The Shepherds



Luke 2:8-20

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

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

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵When 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."

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

Christmas: The Shepherds

This Advent we would like to meditate on the scene around the manger and the different characters who surrounded it.

In the story of Christ's birth, we find the Inn-keeper in the town of Bethlehem, who allowed the expectant family to have a place where they keep their animals. The Emperor August Caesar who made a decree for the census to be taken. The angels and the shepherds, Joseph and Mary, and later King Herod, and the Wise men from the East who were guided the Star, all connected with the birth of baby Jesus.

The first characters I have chosen are the shepherds.
We find their story in Luke 2:8-20.

Who were these shepherds? What were they doing? Living out in fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. I am sure that they were taking turns in the night to watch their flocks and protect them from wild animals and robbers. These simple peasant folks may not have the privilege of getting a school education. They learned through training on-the-job. They have gained experience in tending their sheep. They knew where they will find the grass to feed the flock, where they will find the water to quench the thirst.

They also have couple of gadgets which include a staff and a rod. The staff is molded a little to be used on and for their flock. The staff was used to gently straighten the wavering sheep by putting in their neck. It was also used for bringing tall branches to down to their level, so the sheep can eat from them.

The rod was used not on their sheep but was meant to protect them from the wild animals.

A good and experienced shepherd knows the name and character of each sheep. The sheep also become familiar with the voice of their shepherd, being with them.

We also know about the Good Shepherd. Jesus claimed that "I am the good shepherd." We find this story in John chapter 10. Some more characteristics are given there for our understanding regarding shepherds.

He numbers the sheep and counts them daily, if even one is lost, he locks the rest of them up and goes to find the one which was lost. Till find the lost he is restless. All the sheep know which door to come in through, and for their

safety, Jesus said I am the door where the sheep of his pasture find rest, comfort and safety. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He knows every sheep and is concerned about them. Jesus is also the shepherd of our soul.

Psalm 23 talks about the Shepherd and the sheep and their relationship. He feeds, guides, protects, provides, leads, and then dwells with the sheep for all the days of life, that is forever.

Ezekiel chapter 34 also talks about Shepherds and Sheep. It's about shepherds who do not take care of their sheep. "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?" (vs 2). He further writes that they are not taking care of the weak or healing the sick or binding up the injured – not bringing back the lost sheep. Lost sheep become food for the wild animals (vs 4-5). Then he warned the shepherds, inverse 10, "I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them."

Now let us turn to our context in today's passage. We learn a few lessons from these shepherds.

1. "The Glory of the Lord shone around them." What was that glory? They were watching an angelic choir singing the praise of the Lord

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." NIV

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." KJV

"Glory to God in the highest," - It is a song of praise and honor of the Divine for his wonderful gift bestowed upon them.

"On earth peace" - God is willing to pardon sin through Christ and abolish fear anxiety and enmity with Him.

"Good will towards men" - "While we were yet sinners, he died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Glory or Light indicates the presence of God.

Luke 8:12, "Jesus said, I am the Light of the world."

John 1:4, "In him was life, and that life was the light of men."

2. They received the sign in verse 12 – “You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in the manger.”

This enabled them to identify the child of whom the angel spoke, and to confirm their faith in the good news.

3. They received the message of joy - "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

It is known that there are 366 promises of the Lord listed in the Bible – “fear not,” “don’t be afraid,” “let not your heart be discouraged,” – probably one promise for each day including the leap year which has 366 days in the year.

4. Another piece of news – “Today a savior is born, He is Christ the Lord.” Savior is another name of Jesus.

In Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:31, the angel’s message to Joseph was, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Luke 1:31, “He will be called the Son of the most High, The Lord God will give him the throne of David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

5. They believed and hurried off and came to the place as instructed. There they saw him, the baby lying in the manger.

6. After seeing him, they spread the word concerning what had been told to them and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Do we tell about Christ after finding him personally?

7. The shepherds returned to their work – glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they been told.

God’s word is true, it is as it is.

Psalm 92:1, “It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High!”

Psalm 95:2 “Let us come near him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.”