

**Sunday Sermon Notes:**  
**Ponder: The Experience**  
**Luke 2:15-20**

Introduction:  
Christmas is not over!

**Slide:**

*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.*

**Slide:**

*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. – Luke 2:15-20*

- Finishing up the Ponder Christmas sermon series by focusing upon the experience the shepherds had when encountering Christ at his birth in Bethlehem. Have you ever wondered why the angels would first reveal the good news of Jesus' birth to shepherds? Most shepherds of Jesus' day were considered at the bottom of the totem pole in Jewish society. They were social outcasts, most likely illiterate, and were so distrusted that a shepherd's testimony wouldn't even be accepted in a courtroom. Why would God entrust them to hear the news with an angelic choir in the middle of a field?
- The Jewish Mishnah is a collection of documents recording the oral traditions governing the lives of Jewish people during the period of the Pharisees. An understanding of the Mishnah gives us insight into how Jewish people lived during the time of Jesus. One regulation in the Mishnah:

*"expressly forbids the keeping of flocks throughout the land of Israel, except in the wildernesses – and the only flocks otherwise kept, would be those for the Temple-services..." (Edersheim, Bab K. 7:7; 80a).*

- It would be safe to say that the area around Jerusalem and Bethlehem were not considered the wilderness, where ordinary flocks of sheep were kept. So according to Jewish regulations, the flocks under the shepherds' care near Bethlehem must have been "for the Temple-services." These shepherds watched over sheep destined to be given to the Temple as sacrificial lambs in Jerusalem.

**Slide:**

*"It is a lovely thought that the shepherds who looked after the Temple lambs were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." – William Barclay, Christian scholar*

- When I think some more about the shepherds and ponder as to why God picked them first, I also have to think that it was because they were humble enough to share the good news. Luke's account says that after they had seen the baby, they "spread the word" (v. 17) concerning what they saw and heard. It would have been deemed blasphemous by the Jewish social elite, persons like the Pharisees, if the angels only revealed Christ's birth to them. They would have expected the Messiah to be born in Jerusalem surrounded by a lot more pomp than one lying in a feeding trough in a tiny town like Bethlehem.

*"Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?"*

- James 2:5

This piece of Scripture isn't just talking about these meek shepherds. James is talking about God's MO, it's just the way that He does things. It's in God's nature to use the poor, the small, and the weak to carry out his sovereign will.

- a. Think to the Scriptures with me and remember how he called a single man named Abram from nowhere to be a father of many nations.
- b. Remember Moses, a man with a speech impediment who led an entire slave-nation of Hebrews out of Egypt through the Red sea.
- c. Remember David, the youngest of 8 sons who slayed a highly trained soldier named Goliath, who stood around 9 feet-tall; all when he was about 15 years old, and with a sling, too!
- d. Ponder about Gideon's life, who led an army of 32,000 men to drive out the Midianite troops numbering 135,000. God looked at Gideon's number and reduced his army to 10,000. God still thought their size was still too big, and then trimmed them to a band of 300 men.
- e. Ponder again, the thousands of men, women and children who were fed by a young boy's bagged lunch of 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish when Jesus blessed and multiplied it.

#### My personal testimony:

- These shepherds weren't satisfied with just hearing the good news about the arrival of Jesus, they hurried off to see and experience Christ for themselves. They didn't waste time trying to over-think the situation and talk themselves out of telling the good news.
- How many times have we talked ourselves out of sharing the good news?

These shepherds were humble enough to hear the good news and seek Jesus, and responded by telling others of what they experienced. In the same way, let's not be hindered by what we think we can accomplish through God, but simply share what God has done in us. In doing so, we can shine the light of Christ wherever we go.

#### **Slide:**

*14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

- Romans 10:14-15