

Luke 2:8-20 – “The Sign of the Saviour of Shepherds”

Introduction: **Because God declares peace to the wrong kind of people, we can rejoice in the birth of our Saviour!**

1) The Sign Given

- The Shepherds are the third characters in the book of Luke to come face-to-face with an angel. The first was Zacharias, a priest who was serving in the temple at the time. A perfect candidate. The second was a young girl named Mary, perhaps unexpected because of her social status, but not objectionable.
- On the other hand are the shepherds. They live outdoors with sheep. As a group they were also considered untrustworthy. Even worse is the fact that their profession kept them almost permanently unclean. This meant that they were kept away from the religious life in Israel, they lived at arms' length from God.
- To these unclean shepherds the angel of the Lord appears, not for condemnation, but to declare good news. There is a Saviour born, Christ (“anointed”) can be found in the city of David. The new king is here!
- What is beautiful is that these men are not held at arms' length, but are told to go find Jesus. At times the church can forget this, making Christ too clean for the outcasts of society. Yet the angel tells them that the sign is specifically for THEM! This blessing is because, as they sing, God has put his favour on them.

2) The Sign Received

- The shepherds find that the sign that was promised has come to pass. The baby in the manger is the sign, and that same baby is the Saviour, the king who will allow himself to be put to shame for their sakes. We must never forget that the incarnation is not an end in itself. The incarnation is directed towards the cross.
- There are three reactions to the sign of the angels:
 - The townspeople (v.18) were amazed at the tale, and yet they did not go and see the baby, but ultimately went home unchanged.
 - Mary (v.19) added this to the treasury of signs that she had already received.
 - The shepherds (v.20) respond with praise to God.
- We are no more worthy than these shepherds, and yet we know that we, too are welcomed into the presence of the king for the sake of our Saviour. We are offered peace with God for his sake. This is what the church proclaims to be the hope of the incarnation.