

Chapter 4 Hated From the Start

3 Luke's Good News Chapter 2, verses 8-20

Who is the Savior for?

In that same area around Bethlehem, shepherds were camping in the fields, guarding the sheep where they were gathered, when a messenger of the Lord stood before them, and the Lord's glory illuminated everything around them. They were terrified!

The messenger said, "Don't fear! Look, I am bringing you good news. It is news of powerful joy for all the people. Because today a Savior was born here in David's town. The Savior is the Messiah and Lord."

The presence of God's power and glory is nearly always terrifying to people. And yet, God's message to humble people is nearly always that they can stop being afraid, because God is speaking good news. The message that is good news to all people is this: the needed and long-awaited Savior King has come. And he is called "Lord," a term which people of the Bible used for the only God.

The messenger continued: "Here is a sign and symbol for you: you will find a baby carefully tucked in--in a feed trough for cart donkeys and milk cows." This good-news Savior had come not to some inaccessible place like a wealthy estate, or at the front of a Roman legion. He had come to a place well-known to the shepherds, to the kind of place where dirty field hands would be accepted. He had come to them.

And yet, upon speaking this news, the messenger was accompanied by a vast army of heaven, cheering God, saying,

"In the highest places, Glory to God!
On earth, fulfillment!
In people, blessing!"

When the messengers went from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's get going throughout Bethlehem to see this happening, what the Lord made known to us." They went quickly and discovered Mary, Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the feed trough. And once they had seen all this, they spread the news of what they had heard about this child. And all who heard them wondered about what the shepherds were saying. But Mary treasured all these things, stewing over them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God over all they heard and saw just as it had been spoken to them.

The story is full of contrasts. Shepherds camping in darkness are flooded with light. Terror is answered with joyful news. The King of Heaven sends his embassy to the most common people of earth. They find the newborn King in their humble neighborhood. Shepherds, at the bottom of the social scale, are the first to receive news of the Savior's arrival--and the first to spread that news.

This context is given not to upstage the good news, but to emphasize it. The Savior and Lord who brings joy for all has come to the neighborhood! He is the Glory in the most glorious of places, yet he comes to the least! He is the Fulfillment of the world, so he does not overlook the individual. He is the good news for the joy of down-to-earth people.

Those who have received the good news praise God. And those who hear them wonder about it. And Mary stirs all these ingredients in her heart, savoring a Savior who doesn't do great things in the ways we would expect.

© 2015, David K Shelley, jackofalltribes.com, and International Students, Inc. All rights reserved.