

Luke 2:15-20

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Merry Christmas! I hope you had a joyous Christmas. When we take the time to reflect on the past, the fondest memories are Christmas and other times when the family gets together. As the busy season unwinds let us take time to remember those that had a different kind of Christmas this year due to the recent loss of a loved one. Last week I talked about the prophecy of Micah that the religious leaders referred to when the wise men asked where they could find the new born king of the Jews. We learned about the disparity between the very few that were devoted and the religious leaders who should have been devoted but instead had calloused hearts. They knew the scriptures but they did not know the heart of God. We also learned that they knew all along that the Messiah was to be one of peace.

Today we see that it is a few shepherds that are also among the few that are devoted. The shepherds are in the know because the angels told them so. It is a powerful conviction when the word comes to you from God through angels. They are chosen by God because of their attitudes and character; their faith and their response to their faith. Their response is very important. The response of the shepherds is to go to Bethlehem and see what God has done right now. Instead of the uncaring attitudes of the religious leaders, their response is to go to Bethlehem with urgency. The Bible tells us that they went with haste; they rushed to Bethlehem. After they witnessed this marvelous event, they testified to what they saw, and they praised God.

What we learn from the Scripture is that God's way is unique and different from worldly ways. God's way is the way of humility. The Son of God is placed in a manger. The way of God is not one of wealth, luxury, and royalty. God's way is different from humans. It has been that way from the very beginning, ever since Adam and Eve and all throughout the Bible. Throughout all of history God has a hard time getting through hard heads and calloused hearts. Even after all of the lessons – getting kicked out of Garden of Eden, the destruction of the Tower of Babel, the great flood, failure to keep covenant in the Promised Land – people still have a hard time understanding the difference between God's way and the way of the people. Even when the world has God's very own Son given to it, people still have hard time understanding God's way. What we learn from the shepherds is that devotion is found in only a very few who respond to faith, take action, provide testimonies, and praise God. It is hard heads and hard hearts that God has to get through. God's way is that of shepherds, outsiders, the poor, and the rejected.

Some people prefer to think that with faith everything will be OK. However, regardless of the extent of your faith you are not exempt from problems, trials, pain, and

the setbacks of life. Having faith is a step in right direction. It is your journey of faith that leads you to God's glory. That's what happened with the shepherds. It is their journey of faith led them to God's glory. It is their willingness to step out with a sense of urgency that allowed them to be the first to witness the advent of Christ. The shepherds had faith but they still had problems. They had normal human problems. They were still on the fringes of society. They were still oppressed, rejected, and outcasts. However, it is their journey of faith that led them to God's glory. From that point forward they lived their lives with, thanksgiving, giving their testimonies, and praising God.

The shepherds went looking Jesus in a world that was unknowing and uncaring. When the world weighs heavy on your shoulders you can be like the shepherds in the Bible. You can take the steps of faith that leads God's glory. All throughout the Bible we learn that God's way is different from our way. All throughout the life of Jesus, from his birth to his death, we see that God's way is quite different from our way.