

Luke 2:8-12

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" (NRSV).

Today we will talk about the birth of Jesus according to Luke. Whereas, Matthew has the story of the wise men (which actually takes place much later) Luke has the story of the shepherds. Luke begins the Gospel with a testimony that he has researched everything carefully and wrote a factual account of the life of Jesus. He testifies that the birth of John Baptist was foretold by the angel Gabriel who said he will be great by the Lord's standards (as opposed to human standards) and he will prepare a way for the Lord. Luke further testifies that the birth of Jesus is also foretold by the angel Gabriel.

Luke gives us some specific and important details. Mary is a virgin. The virgin status is one of purity but more important than that is its divine status. A child of a virgin was physically impossible. The only possibility was divine intervention. This makes this a child of God. Luke also tells us about shepherds. This is important because people looked down on shepherds. They had a dirty and thankless job. Beloved king David was a shepherd. His father, Jesse presented his other sons to Samuel to be anointed as the next king and kept the young shepherd boy busy tending the flock. God frequently chooses people that are looked down on by others. The news coming to the shepherds from the angel means a lot. This is a very valid and reliable source of information. It means it comes direct from God. It is one thing when someone tells you some news but an angel has top credibility.

Luke tells us that the angel proclaims some really good news - good news of great joy! This is wonderful news, the best news we have ever received. This is news for all the people, not just news for you and me, but for everybody. The city of David is a very important detail. The city of David is Bethlehem. In the Gospel of Matthew wise men went to Jerusalem and were told by chief priests and scribes to look in Bethlehem. The reason is because it has been written by the prophet. **Micah 5:2** But you, Bethlehem, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel (NRSV). What Luke is saying is this is the fulfillment of prophecy. Luke tells us who this special child is. He is the Savior – he saves people from their selves. The people were looking for a political leader to deliver them from Roman rule.

Luke also gives us information about the manger. Now, this is very significant for two reasons. The 1st significant thing with the manger is the setting. God typically goes against human desire. Humans want royalty, wealth, power, and prestige, but God wants humility. Think about the modern Christmas for a moment. We give presents to each other, we have lots of lights and decorations and a decorated tree. The smell of flowers is all nice. Everything is nice and pretty. Now imagine the birth of Christ. The true Christmas is the mass of Christ. See the picture; there are no lights, no heat, no electricity, and no decorations. The smell is animal and animal waste. It is anything but pretty and nice. The 2nd significant thing about the manger is the sign. God will, at times, provide signs for significant events. Here is your sign you will find this baby in a manger. The great, good, and almighty God has given us a sign. This is so rare and unique it

is a confirmation. Babies are not placed in a feeding trough. Nowhere else on the earth will you find anything like this. It narrows down the search and confirms the angelic proclamation.

To the poor humble shepherds comes the news of the special gift. This is a gift from God for the redemption of the world. When a child is born, there is a party or an elaborate celebration. For this poor couple, and this special child, there should have been the most elaborate celebration of all. But there was no celebration here on earth. No king or royalty attended and no high religious leader attended. Of all the hierarchy on earth they got a few shepherds. This shows us that Jesus came for simple, ordinary people, like you and me. Though there was no celebration here on earth the young family got something better than anything here on earth. There was a celebration of heavenly hosts. **Luke 2:13** suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God (NRSV). Shepherds had the honor of being the 1st to witness this birth. They glorified and praised God. Today we honor the birth of this humble child. Though the parents had no celebration here on earth, we honor them, God, and Jesus, with the greatest celebration on earth every year.