



Grace Bible Fellowship



The birth of the Savior - Celebration, 2023

His name shall be called, Emmanuel – God became one of us

Welcome! Let us worship and enjoy!

Order of Worship

- Welcome, Opening Prayer
- Reading #1: Isaiah 7:14
- Nativity prayer of Augustine
- Reading #2: Matthew 1:18-25
 - **89, Silent Night**
- Reading #3: Matthew 1:18-25
 - **93, Hark, the herald angels sing!**
- Reading #4: Luke 2:15-20
 - **125, While shepherds watched their flocks by night**
- Reading #5: Matthew 2:1-12
 - **141, As with gladness men of old**
- Reading #6: “The Maker of man became Man”, Augustine of Hippo - AD354-430
 - **God rest ye, merry gentlemen**
- Nativity prayer of Augustine... continued
 - **Special Music: In the bleak mid-winter**
- **Devotional in the Word**
- Congregational reading: Advent prayer of Bernard of Clairvaux
 - **132, Go, Tell it on the Mountain!**

This year, take a moment to tell someone the true and best Christmas story – the real thing! Tell them of the love of God, the condescension and humility of Son of God, the eternal One, who stooped to take on lowly human flesh and nature, to become true man in the Christ-child, Jesus. Tell them of the fulfillment of prophesy, tell of his teaching and ministry and miracles, tell them of His death on the cross, of his burial and resurrection. Tell of your redemption from sin and condemnation by a holy God, by grace through faith alone in that same Christ alone.

And tell them of the 2nd Advent, when the Son of Man/Son of David will come to judge His enemies in righteousness and establish His Kingdom on the earth.

The search of the Shepherds - Luke 2:8-20

When you set out to search for something, it's easier if you have clues to guide you. Treasure hunts are based on signs. If you follow them, you find the treasure you're looking for.

V8-9, The situation of the annunciation – Pay attention to *who got the announcement*

Shepherds were the most humble class of that society. Men who smelled badly and dressed in field clothes, whose habits were not attuned to a sophisticated society. Here they were, just doing their lowly job, “keeping watch over their flocks by night” just as they and their forebears had done for centuries. No one knew who they were or where they were. Frankly, nobody cared. *But to them was made the greatest announcement the world has ever heard!*

Jesus' birth was not announced to rich or powerful men, but to simple shepherds; not to people that mattered, but to uneducated shepherds; not in the capital city by The Jerusalem Daily Post, but in the country somewhere outside the insignificant town of Bethlehem; not to the highest government officials in their ivory towers, but to the most common of society on a lonely hillside; not to famous or prominent people, but to unknown, unnamed shepherds; not at noonday to the entire city, but at nighttime to a few shepherds.

Pay attention to two great condescensions in the birth of the Lord Jesus: 1) The condescension of infinite, eternal, holy God to take on human flesh and nature, with all its lowly limitations. 2) The condescension of the holy angel, and the host that accompany him. To move from the direct presence and worship of God in the royal and bright heavenlies, to a dark hillside among the smells and sounds of sheep in corrals guarded by lowly sinful men sleeping on the ground.

It is no wonder they were terribly frightened! The appearance of the angel was not only startling, but fear accompanies angels naturally, because people are sinful and angels are not! They are holy, without sin, and they stand in the presence of and bask in the moral and all-wise perfection of the effulgence of the divine glory. Their natural abode is harmonious perfection. Our natural state is, shall we say, somewhat less than that! Fear of the holiness of God in the presence of His angels is natural and it is right! It is a very sane reaction.

It is this fear of God that makes God's undeserved grace to us so very amazing! Grace is not deserved, but considering our attitudes and actions, destruction is! Yet God, in love and mercy, chooses grace towards us, and not destruction!

The Three Signposts given by the angels to the shepherds

- 1. Sign 1: The sign of the *angelic sermon* – the annunciation itself (v10-11)**
- 2. Sign 2: The sign of the *location: The lowly stable* (v12)**
- 3. Sign 3: The sign of the *chanted song* from the angelic host that suddenly and shockingly appeared in heavenly glory all around the shepherds**

Imagine it! A stable of lowest backwater humility is joyfully and wondrously announced by a perfect celestial harmony, and the lowly hearers are bathed in unimaginable light. God's grace comes in shocking fashion in the most surprising ways!

The treasure search by the shepherds (v15-20)

- 1. The shepherds acted immediately in faith! (V15-16) They left their jobs, their sheep, because of the all surpassing good news!**
- 2. They found what they were looking for – their treasure. (v17)**
- 3. The response of the people was wonder, but not searching (v18)**
- 4. The response of Mary was to ponder, reflect and store (v19)**
- 5. The shepherds responded to what they saw with praise to God! (v20) They searched, found and worshipped!**

Our duty in life is to search, to find and to worship Him. (Hebrews 11:6) May you find Him this Christmas!