
Sermon Notes

December 13, 2015

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

The Day of Small Things: A Shepherd

Luke 2:8-10, 15-18

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

A Short History of Shepherds

- ❖ The shepherds are such a familiar part of the Christmas narrative that it is easy to overlook how remarkable it is that they are chosen to be the first to know Christ and to make Him known

- ❖ Shepherds were viewed in various ways by various cultures at various times
 - in Egypt, shepherds and herdsmen came from the lowest caste
 - some of Israel's greatest national heroes—including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David—were shepherds
 - BUT, shepherds were not very highly esteemed in either the Jewish or the Greco-Roman world into which Christ was born
- ❖ God chooses to use seemingly small, insignificant, socially outcast shepherds in a mighty way!

The Shepherds: Who Were They?

- ❖ Social outcasts who lived on the fringe of society
 - uneducated losers who were on par with Gypsies, vagrants and con-men
 - on the lowest rung of the economic ladder
- ❖ Religious outsiders who were considered ceremonially unclean because of their work
- ❖ Most were hardworking, devoted, and selfless
 - protected the flock
 - led the flock to food and water
 - were liable and had to make restitution for any sheep that got lost (Genesis 31:39)

The Scene

- ❖ Shepherds were most likely to be out in their fields keeping watch over their flocks by night in the spring, when the ewes give birth to their lambs
 - shepherds stayed awake and attentive, in case one of the ewes cried out in distress
 - the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world was most likely born during the season when lambs are born
- ❖ Perhaps it is chilly (as spring nights can be), perhaps the shepherds are gathered around a fire when the black sky explodes with brightness
- ❖ A monumental announcement that changes their lives and the whole course of human history

A Testimony of Praise

- ❖ The shepherds go from being observers of the story to becoming the first to proclaim Messiah's birth
 - God chooses to make these men whose testimony is not accepted in court **His** first witnesses
 - God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary
 - God uses those who have been on the "outside looking in" for their whole lives and puts them at the top of His invite list for the most important birthday of all time

The Day of Small Things

- ❖ Do we tend to think of ourselves or others as being too small, too insignificant, too untalented, too uneducated, or too "ungifted" for God to use?
- ❖ Christ comes to the broken and the lowly
 - Jesus is the One whom Scripture describes as carrying lambs on His bosom
 - Jesus is the One who will not extinguish a burning wick or break a bruised reed
- ❖ Christ has come for you, Christ cares for you

Personal Application

1. Are you ever tempted to look down on yourself or others and think that God cannot use you or them because you or they are too insignificant, too uneducated, or too untalented?
2. Do you ever feel like you are on "the outside looking in"? How does the way God chooses to use the shepherds encourage you about the way things really are?
3. The shepherds respond to God's gracious invitation by serving Him with praise and testimony. How are you using the circumstances God has prepared for you to bring praise and testimony to Him as you make Christ known?
4. What broken place in your life do you need to welcome Christ into this Advent?