

## Come, Let Us Adore Him

Luke 2:8-20 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Merry Christmas, everyone! We're so glad that you joined us tonight to celebrate the birth of Christ the Lord. We put the call out so that anyone and everyone can come and worship Jesus. Whether you saw the services times on our website, the ad on Facebook, the digital billboard on I-15, the banner and sign here on our property, or someone handed you a mug with hot cocoa packets and a tea light or you found one on your doorstep, or you simply remembered this service from a previous year, there is no question as to whether or not you were invited to be here tonight for a birthday. We welcome you all!

I'm guessing, though, that you have had invites to other birthdays. Some you couldn't go to because of a scheduling conflict or sickness or distance or maybe because you just didn't want to go. But I'm also guessing that there has been a birthday or two that you felt like you should have been invited and you weren't. Did those ones leave a bad taste in your mouth, wondering why they would be so cruel as to skip you when handing out the invites? What made you so unworthy to attend that birthday?

On the other hand, though, there are other birthdays that we fully and reasonably don't expect to be invited to. I get it that Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson doesn't just invite me to his daughter's birthday. He's a charismatic guy who seems pretty nice, but why would he invite me to this personal event? I'm just a consumer of his acting products. Might actually be weird to go. Or why would I get invited by the royal family to celebrate one of their birthdays in Buckingham Palace? I'm not important enough for that. I don't have an in there. I would never expect to be invited to their birthdays.

Now I want you to think about those shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. They're just doing their job, nothing special about them, just your average working joes. In fact, you may not know this, but shepherd was not a prized profession among the Jews. Despite the Lord taking on the description of the Good Shepherd, some rabbis considered all shepherds to be unclean, unworthy to come into the house of a really good, orthodox Jew who had followed all of God's laws and kept themselves ceremonially clean and pure. Shepherds were kind of considered lower tier people, not fit for the general populace.

There they are watching their flocks at night and then, "an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." (verse 9) And why wouldn't they be terrified. They were deemed unclean by many of their society. They were not the holy rollers, not the ones that all the Jews looked up to religiously. No, they were imperfect, sinful human beings now in the presence of perfect, sinless, faultless messengers of God. Yes, they love God. Yes, they believe in him. Yes, they try to live their lives in harmony according to God's commands, but they know that they've failed just like all people. They have sinned. They are unclean. They are anything but perfect. Being in the presence of a perfect being, they are aware of just how unworthy they are. They should be vanquished, judged, condemned, destroyed by the perfect being that appeared to them that night.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." (verse 10) Okay. Don't be afraid. This angel is not here to cast me away because of my uncleanness nor destroy me for all my sin. In fact, you have good news. That's something that my trembling heart could use right now.

The angel continued, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." (verse 11) This is great news! This is the news we all came here to hear tonight. We need God to come and save us! We came to adore and worship him for doing what we could not do – living a perfect life for us and sacrificing his life on the cross to take away all our sins, all our imperfections, all our uncleanness, and instead clothing us with his robes of perfection. This is what every person needs to hear!

While letting the news sink in, the shepherds probably started to think, “Hold up a minute. This is a birthday announcement for the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord, God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, born in the town and lineage of King David. This is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. This is a royal invitation to come and see our God, the God we believe in, the God we worship. We’re unprepared. We can’t see God Almighty like this. Even if we were to go, we wouldn’t be allowed in. We’re stinky. We’re in our work clothes. We’re unclean. We can’t go to him to celebrate his birth.”

God should be untouchable and unapproachable for the unclean shepherds working that night just as they trembled and were terrified at the appearance of the angels. They should not be invited to see him. Neither should we. We too are unclean. None of us are perfect, even if we’re really good people. And because any speck of sin disqualifies us from standing in the presence of the holy God, none of us should be invited to celebrate his birth. We instead should be cowering at the idea of God coming to earth because he is perfect and we are sinners. Like the shepherds, we should not be invited to celebrate Christ’s birthday.

The shepherds knew that they had no right to come at this royal invitation to celebrate the Messiah’s, the Christ’s birth. This is why it’s so important that the angel continued: “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (verse 12)

Wait. The Lord, the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior is in a manger? You mean that he is in just some house in Bethlehem, the same kind of houses that we and our families live in? You mean that if we go to him, we won’t be turned away? People won’t call us unclean and refuse admittance to us? You mean we can actually go and worship him as our Savior and our God? Well then, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” (verse 15b) Come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

This is the amazing message of Christmas. God came to us, and not in an untouchable way as a perfect God should be to sinful, imperfect people like us and the shepherds. He invited us to be with him! It should make us feel uncomfortable, as if we shouldn’t be invited. We aren’t perfect or holy. The one and only perfect God came in the flesh, conceived in a virgin named Mary – not because she was pure or holy, but because God who is pure and holy chose to descend to us in this way. He came to our level so that we could be with him. As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus lived up to his name Emmanuel. He came and is God with us, God in the flesh who lives for us, substituting his perfect life for ours. Every sin paid for and all uncleanness wiped away. All perfection completely accomplished by him, and we are made clean by the gift of the Christ Child.

Christ, the Emmanuel, came as God that we can touch, that sinners, people like these dirty shepherds, can and did hold in their arms. He came for us who are unclean and welcomed us just as we were because he did everything to make us clean before God. With the announcement from the angels, it was immediately proclaimed that God invites us to be with him. This is our Savior. This is our God. He brought us out from the cold to him and his warmth. By coming to us in the flesh, he made us worthy to be with him when we were anything but, just like the shepherds.

So, come, let us adore him. We are invited to see Jesus and celebrate his birthday tonight through his recorded and preserved Word. Like the shepherds, we can invite others to Jesus’ birthday as well. We can spread the word concerning this child that he is the God who came down to our level. Unclean as we all are, he takes away our sins, our unworthiness. He gifted us with his perfection. We are now worthy to be in God’s presence because he came to us. He has brought us together to have a home with him.

God has come and made his dwelling with us. We celebrate that today in the town of David a Savior has been born to us. He is the Christ, the one chosen to save us. He is God, the only one who could save us. He came for regular people, unclean people, all people, as shown by him lying in a manger. We are invited to celebrate his birth with him. So, “Sing, all ye citizen of heav’n above. Glory to God, all glory in the highest. Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.” Amen.