

The Shepherds

Luke 2:8-20 (New American Standard Bible)

⁸ In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be **a sign for you: you will find** a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased."

¹⁵ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "**Let us go** straight to Bethlehem then, **and see** this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they **came in a hurry and found their way** to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen this, they **made known** the statement **which had been told** them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds went back, **glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.**

Introduction

Ask the congregation to circle/underline words in verses 15-17: in verse 15, circle 'Let us go, ... and see' ---write down '**check it out**' next to them. In verse 16, circle the word 'found'---write down '**by searching**' next to the word 'found.' In verse 17, circle 'made known... which had been told'---write down the word '**evangelism**' next to the phrase.

I have been doing a sermon series on Christmas characters in the first Christmas story. In the past two Sundays, we talked about: Mary, Joseph, and the angels. Today, we are going to think about the shepherds. Last Sunday, I briefly mentioned the shepherds in my sermon, but my main focus at the time was the angels, not the shepherds. This morning, we will learn three lessons from the shepherds.

Content

Three points on the shepherds. You already circled and wrote down those points in your bulletin.

Let's check it out (v. 15). In verse 12, the angel of the LORD told the shepherds: *This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.* Whether or not the shepherds would actually go and check out the sign, the angel left it to their own will. The angel just announced the news. That is God's style. He offers salvation through Jesus to everyone. However, He never forces anyone to believe in Jesus as Savior. He totally leaves the decision up to the individual.

Then, the shepherds had a quick meeting and decided to check it out: **Let us go straight to Bethlehem and see** (v. 15). They could've easily chosen to stay where they were for a number of reasons such as: *we cannot leave the flock here in the fields tonight. Also, it's after bedtime. We don't want to intrude into people's privacy by knocking at the door asking about the newborn baby. Why don't we just believe the words of the angel?! We don't have to check it out with our own eyes, do we? Let's have faith! By the way, I am tired after the long day of work.* And so forth. None of the above entered the minds of the shepherds.

Unanimously, they agreed to go to Bethlehem on the same day of Christ's birth, on the same night when they were told by the angel. You may call it curiosity. I would call it a **check-it-out attitude.**

Application: When we are instructed by the Word of God, most of us are happy to take as it is. E.g., *Be thankful in all circumstances.* We know that it is good for us. However, very few actually venture out to be thankful in all circumstances. Few check it out if this divine principle works or not. To me, life is like a laboratory where we are called to test out God's promises and principles to discover whether they work or not in our lives. Without checking it out, we will never discover how faithful and loving our God is. Check out the Word of God in your life. You will be glad when you do. Let's go to verse 16.

Diligent search (v. 16). Once the shepherds agreed to visit Bethlehem, they didn't wait until the morning, did they? Right away they hurried on their search of the Savior who was just born. And they **found** their way to baby Jesus (v. 16). The key word: *found.*

I need to speak about the uniqueness of the Greek verb 'to find' in verse 16: they **found.** Some of us may already know the Greek word for 'to find.' In fact, we have been saying it all these years: Eureka! (ευρηκα!). *I have found!* I have found! But, in today's text, when the shepherds found the baby, Luke the writer of the Gospel didn't use the same verb

(Eureka! The root is ‘ευρισκω’--pronounced ‘you-ri-s-ko’). Instead, he used another verb for ‘to find’: “ανευρον” (v. 16--they found--pronounced ‘ahn-you-ron’). The root of the verb here is ‘ανευρισκω’ (ahn-you-ri-s-ko), not ‘ευρισκω’ (you-ri-s-ko). Furthermore, in the entire New Testament, this is the only place the verb ‘ανευρισκω’(ahn-you-ri-s-ko) appears.

A little bit of background information on Luke the writer here would be helpful. Luke was a physician. People back then knew him as someone who would thoroughly investigate, give careful attention to details, and choose the right words to describe the accounts in full truth (Luke 1:3-4). That’s exactly what he did in verse 16. To describe the event of finding the baby accurately, He chose the verb ‘ανευρισκω’ (ahn-you-ri-s-ko),’over ‘ευρισκω’ (you-ri-s-ko). What’s the difference, you may ask? ‘Ευρισκω (you-ri-s-ko) means ‘to find’ and ‘Ανευρισκω’ (ahn-you-ri-s-ko) means to find *by searching*. The shepherds didn’t casually run into the manger and said, ‘Eureka!’ Their findings were made after some search efforts. Unfortunately, most English Bible translations simply translated the Greek word “ανευρον” (ahn-you-ron) ‘they found,’ but the proper translation should have been: **(after a careful search)** they found the baby.¹ Why do I bring this up? For the following reason.

Application: When God leaves an impression on your heart to search for Jesus, you don’t want to ignore or go only halfway. Remember the shepherds? When God told them about the birth of Savior, they went all the way, didn’t they? Not halfway. Likewise, you want to go all the way making a careful search until you find Jesus. You don’t want to *leave any stone unturned* until you find Jesus. Don’t ignore or take lightly when God gives you a desire to find Jesus. Don’t waste the opportunity when God gives you a specific hint of how and where you can find Him. Neither do just lie down and wish for the wind to blow Jesus into your heart. Rather, do a careful search of Jesus, and you will find Him as the shepherds did. Your joy will be great!

Question: Both the shepherds and the magi found the baby Jesus, right? What’s the difference between the ways that they found Him? One group did with the help from the star. The other group did by searching. For the magi, the star led them to the place where Jesus was. When the star stopped above a certain house, the magi knew that was where the Christ baby was (Matthew 2:9). For the shepherds, however, there was no help from the star. No angel guided them, either. They themselves had to do a careful search by knocking at the door one house at a time, of course, on a number of houses inquiring if there was a newborn baby. Imagine, when they finally heard the response, “Yes, we have the newborn baby here!” Ecstatic! Imagine the joy they had when they found the baby lying

in a manger. What a great joy! Such a great joy is reserved for those who diligently search for Jesus.

Make Christ known (v. 17). The birth of the Savior was announced to the shepherds by the angel. They later found the baby Jesus as they had been told. Then, they shared the good news of Christ's birth. Please note the order of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ: *Hear, Experience, and Tell*. That's the key to evangelism. Hear about Christ, know Him, and make Him known to others.

Application: We can apply this principle in sharing the good news with others in our lives. In the past, I have challenged all of you to bring people to Christ. The track records for our congregation, however, have not been stellar. For some reasons, we haven't been able to do it well, despite the fact that some of us genuinely try hard to share the good news with others. One reason that we are not good in sharing the gospel with others is because we have not experienced the living Christ in our lives yet. We have not discovered such a great joy of finding Jesus as our Savior yet. Perhaps, we heard a lot about Jesus in the church. For years. We have known Him by head, but not by heart. We may know a lot *about* Christ, but still don't know *of* Him. Consequently, we have nothing much to share with our neighbors when it comes to Christ.

The key is to know Christ personally. If we experienced Jesus in a tangible way, and in a most exciting way as the shepherds did, then we wouldn't stop talking about Him to others. Like the shepherds, we would shout, glorify and praise the name of the Lord (v. 20). Day in day out. Some may try to stop us from talking about Christ, but they will fail, because we *will* not stop. We will keep talking about Christ, because we know Him by heart and because we have experienced the living Christ in our lives. That's the heart of evangelism: know Jesus personally first and make Him known.

Conclusion

The shepherds had the unforgettable experience of the God incarnate through their search of Jesus. Let us imitate them in our search of the living Jesus. Let us approach the Word of God with a check-it-out attitude. Let us not stop searching for Christ until we experience the living Jesus. Let us know Him first and make Him known to others.

Let us pray.

End note: 1. Three translations correctly translated the verb “αευρον” (ahn-you-ron) in Luke 2:16: Amplified Bible Classic Edition (*by searching they found*), New American Standard Bible (*found their way*), and The Living Bible (*found their way*).