

THE LIVING HOPE



PRECEPT

LUKE 2:13-14

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

GALATIANS 4:4-5

⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

PROMISE

We know that the Christmas shepherds appeared during the night of Jesus' birth. These shepherds are the literal first witnesses of Jesus' birth, apart from the animals in the barn. We may often hear the reason, "Because God doesn't care about riches. So He chose one of the most humble people in the land to witness the humble birth of our Savior." True, but the answer lies beyond just this. It foreshadows the important role Jesus will play as our Good Shepherd. Also, it foreshadows how Israel will treat the Good Shepherd. Like the shepherds, Israel looked down and scorned Jesus. But when the shepherds witness the birth first, this underscores the tone of Jesus' life and ministry on earth. Instead of choosing a life of luxury and power, He has humble origins and exercises humility to the point of death on a cross. It all starts with the shepherds.

How wonderful that God chose the lowest of the low to see the most important birth of all time. Because of their humble origins, the shepherds cannot help but rejoice and tell everyone they see about the birth of the Messiah. If God had chosen a king or a religious leader, the situation would've played out very differently. Instead, he picks a group of shepherds who set the tone for Jesus' life and ministry. Luke 2:15-18 tells us the story, ¹⁵ *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."* ¹⁶ *So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.* ¹⁷ *When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,* ¹⁸ *and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.* The shepherds spread the word; they were exuberant, overflowing with joy and probably still reflected a bit of the glory of being with Jesus. God is His infinite wisdom chose just the right group of people to entrust the greatest news of eternity. Those humble men took the Good News of Jesus and did just what God wanted them to do – told others, and their lives were never the same. Let us remember ourselves that the message of hope is for everyone. The shepherds accepted the invitation to tell others of what they discovered.

We have so much to be thankful for as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, that God's salvation plan includes 'whoever' chooses to acknowledge, accept, and follow Jesus! The invitation now goes out to all, our nationality, occupation, and social status, are not relevant – our response is!

PRACTICE

1. **One Thing.** What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?

2. **Christ in Christmas.** In what ways can we be in awe this Christmas? How can we share our awe with others?

PRAYER

I. Thanksgiving

- May our hearts be filled with gladness as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

II. Faith

- As we reflect on the birth of Christ, may it strengthen our faith and keep us in perfect peace.

III. Hope

- May our hearts be filled with hope and share this gift to those around us especially those who are lonely.

IV. Peace

- Let the Prince of Peace, Jesus, be our guide this holiday season. May tranquillity reign our hearts.

V. Provision

- Pray for provision for families and all ministries working hard to spread the Gospel of salvation.

VI. Unreached

- May the lost and unreached encounter God in miraculous ways. May they accept Jesus in their hearts.

VII. Missionaries

- May all our missionaries be sustained and provided with all that they need to spread the Gospel.