

## **When God Calls – A Shepherd’s Faith**

Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 9:9; John 10:27; Acts 9:10-17; Acts 7:59-60

Luke 2:8-14 – While the shepherds were watching their sheep one night, an angel of the Lord appeared with a message. Yes, the angels come with an announcement to these.... degusting, lowlife, shepherds.

Shepherds are a bunch of dirty, loud, obnoxious liars and thieves. You cannot trust a shepherd. Why, the rabbis wouldn’t allow them to testify in court because they never tell the truth. And watch your back—if a shepherd came to you and started a conversation, there was another one behind you stealing your possessions. And their hygiene...well, they stink.

This is all hard to believe. Angels coming to shepherds with an announcement that the Messiah is born. This news is hard to believe, let alone the first recipients were shepherds. Yet, it happened.

Eventually, the shepherds get their wits about them and decided that since what we saw really did happen... maybe we should listen.

Luke 2:15-20 – The sign will be a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.

Notice: they are not told to immediately GO. They’re simply told that they will FIND the child. (Kind of a teaser!) Why did the angel not command them to go?

Because the shepherds were lowly people. Not much positive happened in their lives. They knew where they stood in the broader society; they were outcasts. Because of this, they were receptive to good news. God knew they would not need much prompting; He knew they would go! God chooses the lowly because they are receptive. The more status and wealth a person has, the more they have to lose to follow Christ; to have a relationship with Him. Remember the rich, young ruler. The Pharisees. People who have nothing to lose are receptive to the gospel. God chooses the lowly to shame the proud. 1 Cor. 1:26-31

The shepherds can’t wait. Fear or no fear, off they run to Bethlehem to “see this thing.” (Notice the language.) And what they find is exactly as the Angel foretold.

What was their reaction to what they found in that manger? We see them leap into action! They began to spread the word about baby Jesus and did so with such enthusiasm that those who heard are amazed! They couldn’t stop talking about what they had heard and seen...all the while glorifying God for including them in this magnificent moment.

They were acting in faith. A faith that was transforming them. “We have seen the Messiah!”

### **When God Calls, Listen Up!**

Luke 2:10 – The shepherds did not just “hear” the angelic message, but they “listened” to it. “Hearing” is simply perceiving sound. “Listening” is paying attention to the message by not only hearing it, but also understanding it and responding to it. These faithful shepherds did just that.

They heard, they understood (as best they could), and they responded. No selective hearing here! Matthew 9:9 - Matthew, the tax collector “listened” to Jesus words and made the decision to follow Him.

John 10:27 – Jesus’ sheep listen to His voice and follow Him.

We, too, need to listen.

### **When God Calls, Saddle Up!**

“Saddle Up!” is a term from the old Western movies whose simple imagery meant, “It’s time to GO!” And that’s exactly what the shepherds did.

Luke 2:12, 15-16a – The shepherds hurried to see “the sign” of the baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger. They took this upon themselves. They were not willing to wait.

There’s another story in the New Testament where God spoke, and a person was faced with a “saddle up” decision.

Acts 9:10-11, 17a – Ananias was tasked with going to Saul, who would become the apostle Paul, to pray over him, commissioning him to be Christ’s ambassador. Saul was a persecutor of Christians. Ananias was reluctant to go because of Saul’s reputation. Yet, he went; he obeyed Christ. This one act set in motion Paul’s ministry that would change the world.

The shepherds teach us there is no need to hesitate when God calls. Ananias shows us that though we may hesitate, if we’ll trust God, amazing things await. Possibly a world changed, a life changed, MY life changed, YOUR life changed. Forever. Saddle Up!

### **When God Calls, Speak Up**

Luke 2:17-18 - These faithful shepherds didn’t stop at simply “hurrying to see this thing that had happened.” Having seen, they were compelled to speak up—to tell the story of a baby Messiah. A story seemingly unbelievable, yet those hearing it “were amazed!”

In Acts, chapters 6 and 7, there’s the account of Stephen who was faithful to tell the story of this Messiah, Jesus Christ, recently crucified and resurrected. Instead of his hearers being “amazed,” they chose to stone Him.

Acts 7:59-60 - Stephen would “speak up”- even with his last breath – to ask forgiveness for those seeking to take his life. Speaking up even as his Lord spoke up on the cross: “Father, forgive them.”

When God calls, the faithful speak up to share the love of Jesus.

### **The Faithful Shepherds**

Luke 2:20 - The shepherds at the end of their journey were glorifying and praising God for what they heard, what they saw, and what they had been told. These shepherds, as far as we know, never changed vocations, but they had become evangelists. That word comes from a Greek word that simply means, “to tell the good news.” That’s what they had done after meeting Jesus.

It’s what we’re all to do having met Jesus. Tell our story. Tell His story. To join with those faithful shepherds from a starry night long ago and share the good news that the Messiah is alive.

May we listen to his voice. Go where he leads, and speak of the good news of our Messiah, Jesus.