

Christmas Shepherds...

Christmas Eve, 4:00 Service
First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Illinois

Matt Matthews

Luke 2:1-20 2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, 19 and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds

returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

* * *

Tonight, I want to ask some questions about the Shepherds in the Bible story I just read. What do you know about shepherds?



- I know the word “shepherd” comes from the old English, and it means “sheep” “herder”.
- I know that sheep need a shepherd, or they’ll get lost.
- I know that being a shepherd is one of the oldest jobs in the world.
- I know there are shepherds all over the world.
- There are lots of things I know about shepherds, but lots more things I wonder about. I wonder, was cold on the night the shepherds were visited by angels?



- I wonder, were the shepherds warm in those fields looking after their sheep?



- I wonder, how did the shepherds feel when the angels appeared to them? Were they excited? Were they a little afraid? Were they filled with curiosity? I wonder.



- (These pictures are from the stained glass windows of a church in Baltimore, the Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church.)
- I wonder about the angels, too. I wonder if they looked like people I know?



- I wonder, did the angels sing a pretty song? Did they clap their hands? Did they flap their wings?



- I wonder about the stable, and the star, and the holy family.



- I wonder about Mary and Joseph. A stable is like a barn where animals are sometimes kept. Were sheep at the stable?



- I wonder, were there children in the stable at the manger? Were they happy? Were they surprised?



- I especially wonder about the Shepherds.



- Did the shepherds walk a long way to get to Bethlehem? Were they hungry when they got there? Were they excited to see Jesus? What did they do with their sheep back in the fields?
- I wonder about the shepherds. Were they brave? Were they curious? Were they amazed?

(slides go dark.)

Let's hear their story again. Help me tell it, will you?

(Matt ad libs entre into the story dialogue.)

Christmas Participation Story

Christmas Eve 4:00/ edited 20Dec2022

JUDI:	Shepherds	"Yo, Sheep!"
RACHEL:	Sheep	"Baa!"
ALL:	Night	Silent night, holy night (sung w/piano accompany)
JOE GRANT:	Angel	Hallelujah! Hallelujah! (sung w/organ accompany)
JUDI	Good news	"Yes!" (with fist pump)
JOE:	Great Joy	Yey!
RACHEL:	Baby	"Ahhh"

Long ago in a country far away from this one, there were *shepherds...*

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

watching over their *sheep...*

...RACHEL: Baa!

by *night.*

...ALL: Silent night, holy night/All is calm, all is bright

Being good *shepherds...*

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

they protected their *sheep,*

...RACHEL: Baa!

made sure they had food to eat and water to drink, and gathered them together at *night...*

...ALL: Silent night, holy night/All is calm, all is bright

for protection. The *shepherds...*

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

were listening to the soft sounds of the *sheep...*

...RACHEL: Baa!

as they quieted down to go to sleep. The dark sky was full of shimmering stars that *night.*

...ALL: Silent night, holy night/All is calm, all is bright

And then..all sound stopped and an **angel...**

...JOE: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

appeared to them. They were bathed in light, almost as if they glowed from within. The **shepherds...**

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

were frightened and so were the **sheep.**

...RACHEL: Baa!

The **angel...**

...JOE: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

spoke to them. “Don’t be afraid. I have some **good news...**

...JUDI: YES! (with fist pump)

to share. My **good news...**

...JUDI: YES! (with fist pump)

will bring **great joy...**

...JOE: YEY!

to all people. The **good news...**

...JUDI: YES! (with fist pump)

is this: this very day in David’s town, a **baby...**

...RACHEL: Ahh!

was born. And this **baby...**

...RACHEL: Ahh!

is your savior—Christ the Lord.” The **shepherds...**

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

were amazed and so were the *sheep*.

...RACHEL: Baa!

What they thought was going to be like every other evening had turned into a holy *night*.

...ALL: Silent night, holy night/All is calm, all is bright

The *angel*...

...JOE: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

told them to go into Bethlehem where they would find the *baby*.

...RACHEL: Ahh!

Then the sky was filled with *angels*...

...JOE: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

singing praises to God, proclaiming the *good news*...

...JUDI: YES! (with fist pump)

with *great joy*...

...JOE: YEY!

then they were gone. The *shepherds*...

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

looked at each other and at the *sheep*.

...RACHEL: Baa!

“We should go to Bethlehem and see the *baby*...”

...RACHEL: Ahh!

they said. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the *baby*...

...RACHEL: Ahh!

lying in a manger. When the *shepherds*

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

saw him, they told Mary and Joseph what the *angel...*

...JOE: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

had told them about the *baby*.

...RACHEL: Ahh!

And that they had come to see the *good news...*

...JUDI: YES! (with fist pump)

for themselves so that they could share the *great joy*.

...JOE: YEY!

Everyone who heard what the *shepherds...*

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

said was amazed. Mary listened to all that was said and treasured it in her heart. The *shepherds...*

...JUDI: Yo, Sheep!

went back into the hills to their *sheep...*

...RACHEL: Baa!

singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen. It had been just as the *angel...*

...JOE: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

had told them. They had knelt before the *baby...*

...RACHEL: Ahh!

received the *good news...*

...JUDI: YES! (with fist pump)

felt the *great joy*...

...JOE: YEY!

and when they were finally settled down, turned to each other and proclaimed, “What a *night!*”

...ALL: *Silent night, holy night/All is calm, all is bright*

All pictures used with permission from Matt Matthews, Charles Ledford. Shepherd photo: Shepherd in Făgăraș Mountains, Romania.