



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- December 28, 2023

The Lord be with you.

Merry Christmas. That's right. I'm still saying Merry Christmas. I'm in the Christmas spirit. But I guess that the gifts have probably all been opened by now and there's nothing left under the tree and most of the turkey and ham are gone. And, but I just hope you had a wonderful Christmas celebration of our savior's birth. And, but I know that the days after Christmas that people do talk sometimes about post Christmas blues and post Christmas let down.

But you know what happens on those days after Christmas is perhaps more important than anything that happens on those days before Christmas? As the gospel of Luke tells us what Mary, the mother of Jesus, what she did on those days after Christmas that on top of changing diapers and nursing and everything else that goes into caring for a newborn. It tells us that Mary, it says she treasured all these words. The shepherds told her and pondered them in her heart as the shepherds told her about the angels bringing heaven's good news of the birth of a savior. She treasured them. She pondered them.

And so let's you and me let's, let's, let's take some time on these days after to also treasure and to ponder the words of the shepherds. I don't know about you, but it seems for me that the more familiar I am with a Bible story like Christmas that the more difficult it can be for me to see Christmas with fresh eyes. And so let, let's see if we can't climb back over 2000 years to see these shepherds and their news of the angels singing. Let's see if we can't see it with new eyes.

Now, as, as I'm talking about shepherds, I have to tell you that II, I have a friend who was raised on a sheep farm in Colorado and my friend tells me that when he was in high school, that all the other kids of a school, they did not want to be around him. And that because caring for sheep is dirty, smelly business. And that helps me a little bit to think about the story of the shepherds at that first Christmas that, that people then in first century Judea, they didn't want to be around shepherds either.

So let's let, let's forget for a moment how we see shepherds portrayed in our church pageants because the reality is that shepherds were despised by other people. Shepherds were at the lowest end of the social scale. They were at the lowest end of life's pecking order. So that according to the Jewish law of the day shepherds were not allowed to enter a synagogue. Shepherds were not allowed to enter the temple to offer sacrifices. And as it was a culture that was fanatical about that boundary between clean and unclean that which was morally ceremonially clean and unclean. So shepherds were looked down on by everyone else as unclean. In fact, shepherds were so despised then that the testimony of a shepherd was not allowed in a court of law. And in fact, people even warned, never buy anything from a shepherd because you would just have to assume that it had been stolen.



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And so shepherds, they were technically identified in this class as sinners. They were part of that class of people that well any good person would want to avoid. And you know, I I think all of this figures into why on these days after Christmas that, that Mary is treasuring and pondering what the shepherds have told her that on that night of Christmas, the shepherds, when they were out in the open fields, keeping watch over their sheep, it says that the glory of the Lord shone around shepherds.

Do you know that it had been literally hundreds of years since the glory of God had appeared on earth? And now the glory of God appears to shepherds. I mean, it's not the glory of God appearing to the high priests in the temple nor to King Herod or Emperor Caesar, but the glory of God appeared to despise outcast shepherds. And the angel tells the shepherd, he says, don't, don't, don't be afraid. And the angel even invites them, invites them to visit the newborn king of kings telling them, telling them, he says, this will be a sign for you. You will find the messiah wrapped in bands of cloth lying in a manger that is lying in a feeding trough for animals in a barn.

So that was a sign that they were to look for a sign that would identify the king of kings, the Lord of Lords, the Messiah that they would not find him in a palace or a mansion. But they would find the Messiah king lying in a manger and that he would be ramped. The text says that he was wrapped in bands of cloth and Bible scholars tell us that poor peasants have that day poor peasants like shepherds that they wrap their newborn in bands of cloth. And so the angel invites shepherds, invites them to go and visit the Christ child, don't be afraid. He says shepherds who could not even enter the temple, who could not enter a synagogue that they were welcomed at the birth of the son of God. As God's son comes for the lowly, the rejected, the poor, the outcasts.

I mean, yes, he also comes for the rich and I mean, who will appear later in the story. But those kings from the east to bring gold and frankincense and Myrrh. But the shepherds outcasts are a welcome at the manger. They are the unclean whom God looks upon as clean. They are the outcasts that God welcomes. He welcomes as his guests. And these, these shepherds actually become the first preachers of the good news of Christmas as it says of these shepherds. It says that they made known what they had been told about this child that is in those days after Christmas, they, they told others and it tells us that the shepherds returned to their work.

Well, that means as you and I think about going back to work. It means that you and I now that Christmas is all over as the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all that they had seen and heard. Well, that's what you and I get to do on these days after Christmas that they despise the unclaim the outcast hous wise men too. Are welcome by the Son of God as you today as you are welcome by Jesus Christ, just as you are.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.