

# 15.12.24 pm: Good News for the Shepherds

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Date: 15 December 2024

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. It's good to see all of you. You can see this evening, as was intimated this morning, that we gather around the Lord's table, and maybe I should say as well that it's the Lord's table, it's not North Harris Free Church table, it's not a denomination table, so if you are trusting Christ, if you're a member in any church, then the invitation is there for you.

We're going to sing to God's praise, and we'll sing from Psalm 23. Psalm 23, verses 1 to 3, the first two stanzas of the psalm.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me the quiet waters by. My soul he doth restore again, and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness.

Even for his own name's sake. These two verses of Psalm 23 we sing in Gaelic, and remain seated as we sing to God's praise. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

NINGNINGNINGNING!

[ 1 : 5 1 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 4 : 1 9 ] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. that the all-powerful, all-holy, sinless, almighty God would promise to meet with us.

We who are so small and so insignificant in so many ways, and so sinful, Lord, we confess that we are sinful.

As we draw near to the table, each time we are so conscious of the fact that we are sinners, that we fall and that we fail in the words that we say in the silences, where sometimes we refuse to speak, in the things that we do and in the things that we fail to do, in the thoughts that pass through our minds.

[ 5 : 5 4 ] We confess, Lord, that we sin. But we thank you that the table that is set is a table that is for sinners, who are seeking cleansing from the blood of Christ, the blood that was shed.

And we thank you that we have the promise that when we confess our sin, that you are faithful and just to forgive us, to purify us, not from some, but from all unrighteousness.

And so we thank you, Lord, for that promise. We pray once more for that cleansing. And we pray that we would know the assurance of pardon and the joy of your salvation.

We thank you for the cross. We thank you for the death of Jesus, his body given, his blood shed.

We thank you that he is the good shepherd, the one who laid down his life for the sheep. Life was not snatched from him, but he chose to lay down his life so that we could be forgiven.

[ 7 : 14 ] He chose to pay the penalty of sin, which is death, so that we could live. And we ask that you would enable us in this hour and every hour that you give us to remember that all that has been done for us.

We pray, Lord, that you would be close to each one of us here tonight. You know our hearts. You know our minds. You know how our minds can be so cluttered at times.

You know how we can drift. We pray that you would draw us close. We pray that you would help us to focus, to fix our eyes on Jesus. We pray for those who are absent as well.

We continue to pray for those who grieve. We continue to pray for those who are sick, for those who are feeling the weight of the years and who are isolated and who are in their homes just now.

And we ask that you would draw near to them as we think of them. We pray for those who are struggling in this season with the temptation to drink or to take drugs or to fall into habits which are destructive.

[ 8 : 30 ] And we ask, Lord, that you would help them. That they would look to you and that they would find the strength that you alone are able to give. We pray for any tonight who may be in a state of turmoil, who may have heard the call of Jesus to come, who may know that they should be professing their faith in Christ and have yet held back.

And many of us were in that position for many years ourselves. And so, as we think of any whom you may be striving with, Holy Spirit, we pray that you would continue to strive and that they would find peace in Christ as they come, as they believe, as they profess faith in Jesus.

in Jesus. We pray that you would be with Scott and Fiona and the girls and especially Scott as he preaches this evening in Kinloch, giving words to say, we pray.

We pray for Gordon as well as he preaches in Graver. We ask, Lord, that you would speak through him and that you would guide him and Julian as they seek your will for their lives as they respond to the call to serve.

So hear our prayers, we pray, and lead us and guide us in worship. And we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing again to God's praise.

[ 10 : 01 ] We'll sing Mission Praise 597, Silent Night. Silent Night Day from sight, May I'm jocelyn in stable day.

Watch for the child, beloved, and fear, sleeping in heavenly rest, sleeping in heavenly rest.

Silent Night, Holy Night, Shepherds' words saw the light, earth resounding, clear and long, far and clear the angels' song, Christ's name.

Christ's Redeemer is here, Christ's Redeemer is here.

Silent Night, Holy Night, Son of God, O how bright, love is smiling from your face, stripes, what's lovely out of grace, Savior, since you are born, Savior, since you are born.

[ 12 : 20 ] If you could turn now, please, in your Bible to Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2, and we'll read from verse 8 to verse 21.

This is God's word. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[ 13 : 50 ] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We'll sing again now to God's praise, this time from Mission Praise 764.

[ 15 : 02 ] It's a paraphrase of the verses that we read. While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground, an angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around. and glory shone around.

glory shone around. With awe steady for mighty dread, that ceased their troubled mind, that tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind.

to you and David's kindness came is born of David's life, a Savior who is Christ the Lord, that this shall be the sign.

The heavenly name you there shall find, to you a new display, all neatly wrapped in squabbling bonds, and in a manger laid.

[ 16 : 52 ] The angels, the angels, and forthwith appear, a shining throng, of angels praising God to us, and rest their joyful song.

O glory be to God, and to the earth be reached, good thrill and tour from heaven to heaven, begin and never cease.

If you could turn please to the passage that we read in Luke chapter 2.

Again we'll pray as we go there. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, we thank you for this testimony that we have, for this gospel, for the good news about Jesus.

We thank you for the account here of the birth of Jesus being announced to shepherds, for the glory that fills this scene, for the impact it had on these men.

[ 18 : 25 ] And we ask that something of the impact that they felt would be felt by us even this evening. We pray that we would be filled with joy, that we would know the peace of God, which passes all understanding, as we think about the child that was born, the saviour of sinners.

Help us never to take these things for granted. Sometimes we wonder what it would feel like if we as sinners had no place to go to lose the burden of guilt and sin that weighs us down.

How bleak and how hopeless that would be. We thank you, Father, that such was your love for sinners, that you sent your Son into this world, that he who knew no sin was willing to become sin so that we who were sinners could be made righteous in and through him.

Give us eyes to see, we pray, the wonder of that, the joy of that, the goodness, the power of the news of that, that we can be free, that we can be safe for time and for eternity, that we can be forgiven, that the slate can be wiped clean if we believe in Jesus.

Help us, we pray, not only to take this in, but to be willing to share this message. We're so conscious of how dark a world this is.

[ 20 : 22 ] We're so conscious of how many people are struggling and suffering and how many people feel hopeless. And yet we have this message of a sure and certain hope in Christ.

Give us opportunity and courage, we pray, over this Christmas season to share that message, to tell people about Jesus. and we ask that you would be opening hearts here and elsewhere to receive the Savior.

For we pray these things in his name and for his sake. Amen. Well, tonight we're thinking about the good news.

The good news for shepherds. We've been thinking about the good news over the last two weeks. The birth of Jesus was good news for Joseph. God's promises are always kept.

It was good news for Joseph and for Mary, although it would have terrified them first, the fact that this baby was going to be born, who was the Savior. The birth of Jesus was good news for the wise men who traveled such a long way to come to Jesus.

[ 21 : 45 ] and the birth of Jesus was good news for shepherds. And we read the account of how that good news story broke into their lives in the passage that we read.

And what perhaps passes us by is just how unlikely it was that the good news about Jesus' birth would come first to shepherds.

But sometimes good news breaks first in the most unlikely places. I remember some years back, I couldn't find the news story, but I was trying to recall it, I think, from teenage years.

I think it was an armed robber who had been guilty of various attacks, various offensive offences, and he was on the run.

So there had been various crimes down south, and he made the headlines of the news, and a nationwide manhunt was launched to try and find this dangerous criminal, and images of the suspect were posted, well they weren't posted online in these days, they were put all over the TV and the newspapers, and people were to be alert, they were to be looking out for this character, they weren't to approach him, but if they saw him they were to immediately tell that there had been a sighting of this man.

[ 23 : 21 ] A week passed and there was no sightings and there was some degree of alarm as to where he would be. But just over a week after the story broke, there was good news, and the account came to us, the criminal has been located, he's been intercepted, he's been arrested, the search is over, he's been detained, the panic is over, but where did the good news story break from?

The armed robberies, I think, if you remember right, they were in London and Manchester, these kind of cities, where did the good news break from that the suspect had been intercepted? Well, the good news broke from a wee post office in the south end of Skye.

We'd expect this kind of news story to break in the heart of London. We'd expect to see somebody like Gordon, a chief inspector, standing in front of cameras and giving a statement, but what we actually had was an interview from a wee post master in I think it was Breckish.

Seems very unlikely, but that's how it happened. And the birth of Jesus, the birth of God the Son, the most powerful good news story that ever has been or ever could be told, how did it first break?

Who were the first to know? Well, it wasn't theologians, it wasn't kings, it wasn't prime ministers that first heard the story, it didn't go to an international news station, it came first to shepherds out in the field.

[ 25 : 19 ] The good news came first to shepherds, and so tonight I want to think about first of all the shepherds, secondly the song that they heard as the angels broke into their experience, and thirdly the fact that these shepherds as they heard the news, as they experienced all that was going on, they are saved.

So first of all the shepherds, verse 8, we'll step through the verses again. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night.

Now there's three things to note about the shepherds, just so we can get a clear picture of what the shepherds were like as we try to think ourselves back into that first context. the first thing to note about the shepherds as we think about how the good news of the birth of Jesus came to them is how unlikely it was, how unlikely these shepherds were as candidates to be the first to hear the good news.

They were just shepherds. And shepherds were not the in crowd of the day back at the time of Jesus' birth.

Shepherds were characters that were disreputable. They weren't trustworthy and cuddly and the kind of people that we would go to as we do today in Harris.

[ 26 : 59 ] Shepherds in this place at this time they were characters that people kept at a distance. They weren't the in crowd of the day. They lived out in the hills. They lived a lonely life.

They were usually the last to hear the news. And yet the news of the birth of Jesus comes first to them.

One commentator says, the first announcement of the Messiah's birth was given by an angel to some anonymous shepherds.

Why shepherds? Why not to priests or to scribes? He asked Weersby. Then he gives the explanation, by visiting the shepherds, the angel revealed the grace of God toward mankind.

shepherds. So who were the shepherds? Well, they were unlikely characters. You could say they were the unknown people of their day.

[ 28 : 09 ] And if we think about the application and what the significance is for us today, the message that comes through to us so clearly is that God is interested in the people that this world is not interested in.

The shepherds were not on the front page of the tabloids, except for all the wrong reasons. The shepherds did not have the paparazzi chasing after them.

They didn't have their own YouTube channel. They didn't have a thousand followers or I don't know how many followers, there's a lot of followers on Instagram. They were unknown.

They were insignificant. People were not interested in the shepherds. And yet God was interested in them. So interested that he decided that the good news about the birth of God the Son would go to them first.

So let's never forget that God cares for the people that others overlook. God has an interest in the people that others despise and write off.

[ 29 : 40 ] God shows grace and love to the most unlikely people. People like shepherds.

People like us. The shepherds were unlikely. the shepherds were unrighteous. The second thing to know about the shepherds.

They were regarded as the most notorious sinners. Anna did a talk to the kids club here a few weeks ago and she said shepherding was the kind of job that you did when you couldn't get any other kind of job.

because that's the reality of how it was. If you'd burnt your bridges, if you were notorious, if you were known to be a sinner, the only thing you could do was be a shepherd.

Out onto the fields, away from the public crowds, be a shepherd. So we think today in terms of bad people, if we were to say who are the bad people of our day, people would probably say well drug dealers and murderers, you know, they're the bad people.

[ 31 : 05 ] Back in this day, it was tax collectors and shepherds. They were sinners, they were unrighteous and they were regarded as the most unrighteous of the unrighteous but the good news about Jesus was good news for them.

It came first to them. So what's the application here? Well the application is that there is no one too bad. There is no one who is too unrighteous.

there is no one who is too disgraceful. There is no one who has too bad a reputation. There is no one who has too dark a history. There is no one who is beyond the interest and the saving power of Jesus.

He saves to the uttermost. He is interested in reaching out to the shepherds. They were unlikely.

They were unrighteous. And the last thing about the shepherds to note is they were considered to be unclean. One commentator says, shepherds were really outcasts in Israel.

[ 32 : 37 ] Their work not only made them ceremonially unclean, but it kept them away from the temple for weeks at a time so that they could not be made clean. So when people thought about the shepherds, they were the unclean.

One other commentator says, those who were ceremonially unclean were separated from worship in God's temple, and any person or thing they touched was made unclean as well.

So the shepherds, they're regarded as unclean, and because they are ceremonially unclean, nobody wanted to touch them. Because if they touched you, if you had contact with them, you then became unclean.

So they were kept at a distance. Nobody wants contact. And yet, the amazing thing that we read here is that the God of heaven, he sends his angels to make contact with the shepherds.

Not with the kings, not with the priests, not with the scribes, not with the Pharisees, not with those who were considered to be clean, but he sends the messengers, the angels, to make contact with the shepherds.

[ 34 : 02 ] The angels of heaven invite the shepherds to come and to worship the Lord Jesus.

So you have this picture of the shepherds, they wouldn't have gotten the door to the church. Stay back, you're unclean. But the king and the head of the church sends special agents, special messengers to make contact with them and to say come.

So right from the birth of Jesus, the message went out, Jesus is calling the unclean. Jesus is calling sinners.

to come to him. And that's who we all are. We are sinners.

Romans 6 23, isn't it? We are all unclean at the heart level. But the good news is that Jesus came to make us clean.

[ 35 : 20 ] He came for people like shepherds. He calls people like shepherds. To come to him and to believe in him and to take a place at his table.

It's staggering. And tonight, if you and I are going to take a place at the Lord's table, if we are going to take the bread, if we are going to take the wine, we need to agree that we are just like the shepherds.

We are unlikely people. There's nothing special about us that would merit the grace and favor of God.

And we're unrighteous people. If you're going to sit at the table, you have to put your hand up and say, I am unrighteous. I am a sinner.

And if we're going to come to the table, we need to confess that we are unclean in our hearts, in our minds, in our actions.

[ 36 : 47 ] We are unclean. Even the best of what we try to do is stained with sin. Isaiah talks about the fact that even our best works are like filthy rags.

We're unclean. we confess all of that as we come to the table. We confess as we come to the table that we are not worthy.

But we are coming in response to the call of the Savior who is worthy. We're just like the shepherds. The table is for the shepherds.

shepherds' second point is the song. That takes us into verse 9.

So we see in our minds' eye the angels, these messengers of God, and they come to the shepherds and there's praising of God, there is singing, the glory of heaven breaks through into earth.

[ 38 : 02 ] And these fields, these remote fields, where the sheep are gathered together and the shepherds are out, they become this place of praise and worship.

An angel of the Lord, verse 9, appeared to them, the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. So here's an interesting question to think about.

How would you expect the shepherds to respond? And we sometimes gather together to have a praise evening.

We sit and we open the books and we look at the screen and we're going to praise the Lord. If you think about characters like the shepherds, the most unlikely, the most on the margin people, the hardest nuts, and you imagine them and you take them into the place of worship and you give them a mission praise book, how would you expect them to respond?

How would you expect people like shepherds to respond to this invitation to praise the Lord? Remember, these are not church people, these are not what you would call spiritual people, these are hard men.

[ 39 : 22 ] They don't do church. how are they going to respond to the angels? Saying, come and praise the Lord. Well, it says in verse 9 that they were filled with fear.

Hard men. Terrified. They're filled with fear. And you know, when we meet with God, truly, when he reveals even a dim reflection of his glory to us, the response is always fear, a deep reverence.

even the most hardened cynics, the most vocal atheists, the most lukewarm people, if they, if we see the glory of God, then we will be filled with fear.

And we should pray for that. I pray that we would have a greater vision of the glory of God to arrest us and to shake us out of our worldliness, to break through hardened hearts.

Because that's what we see in the shepherds. they see a glimpse of the glory of God through the angels. And they're terrified.

[ 41 : 31 ] And the angel, verse 10, said to them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

it's an amazing command. Terrified shepherds, shaken by the glory of God, so aware of their unworthiness and the awesomeness of God.

And the message that comes from heaven is do not fear. God's It's a great command.

Sometimes we hear people saying, I don't want to be a Christian. All these do nots in the Bible. Why would I want to have any of that in my life?

All these do nots. Well, here is the most encouraging do not that anybody ever heard. Do not fear. Do not fear, says the angel, as they take the message from heaven.

[ 42 : 44 ] heaven. It's not their message, it's a message from God, given to the angels for the shepherds, saying, do not fear. The commentator, or the Bible translators, Tyndale, they have this comment on this verse.

They say, the phrase, do not be afraid, is written in the Bible, how many times do you think? 365 times.

That's what the translators are saying. The phrase, do not be afraid, is written in the Bible, 365 times, once for today, not for tomorrow, not for the day after, and the day after, and the day after, and the day after.

Wearspeed says, fear not, is one of the key themes of the Christmas story. We have it in Luke 1, 13, verse 30, verse 74, we have it in Matthew chapter 1, verse 20, and this is what the shepherds are hearing.

Fear not, the God who is almighty, the God who is holy, the God who is righteously angry at our sin, says to sinners, like the shepherds, like you, like me, you don't have to fear.

[ 44 : 13 ] So how can that be? Well, let's read on, verse 11. For, that's the joining word, what's the cause, what's the reason that we're given for not fearing?

For unto you, say the angels, is born in this day, in the city of David, a saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

And so they're given the birth announcement. Why do you not have to fear? Because of this birth announcement you're just about to hear. There's a saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

When we read a birth announcement in the newspaper or or whatever, it will say something like, you know, baby Archie or baby Katie was born on such and such a date to proud parents, John and Flora or whoever.

But the baby is born to the parents. But this birth announcement is different. Notice that the child that was born, verse 11, was not born unto Mary and Joseph.

[ 45 : 31 ] That's not what it says, but unto you. shepherds. The angels say to the shepherds, this child that is born, this saviour is for you.

And this, verse 12, will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. and then there's the song.

Having received this birth announcement, this amazing news, there is this song. Suddenly, verse 13, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among those with whom he is pleased.

So there's the shepherds, and there is the song.

And in the midst of all of this, is this amazing truth that they, and we, we don't have to fear.

[ 46 : 54 ] And that's one of the gems within the Christmas story, the fact that you and I, if we're Christians, we don't have to fear.



We don't have to fear God in that dreadful sense. Yes, we must have reverence, but we don't have to fear him in the sense that we run from him.

Rather, as we are overcome with the glory and the power of God, we are called to run to him, not from him, but in humility and with reverence, we run to him.

We don't have to fear him. And when we have Jesus as our savior, we don't have to fear the wrath of God, the anger of God, because Jesus has taken it in our place.

He drank the cup of God's wrath so that we don't have to. And when we have Jesus as our savior, we don't have to fear death because Jesus has died in our place, and we don't have to fear hell because Jesus has opened up the way to heaven.

[ 48 : 26 ] And we don't have to fear anything in this life because Jesus has promised that he will be with us, and he'll never leave us, and he'll never forsake us.

He will help us with all the things that stress us out. If you and I have Jesus, we don't have to fear.

rather we can sing. We can join in with the song of praise that the angels presented and the shepherds heard.

Shepherds song, finally, saved. verse 15. When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, well, actually, let's hit pause for a moment.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, what would you expect the shepherds at this point to say to one another? I mean, they've had this amazing experience.

[ 49 : 54 ] Heaven breaks through to earth as they receive this good news message that is for them. What would we expect them to say? Well, we might expect them to say, well, that was quite an experience.

Remember, these are hard brutes. they don't talk about their feelings. They don't talk about spiritual stuff. We might expect them to say something like, well, you know, did you see what I saw?

Did you hear what I heard? That was quite an experience. I suppose we better get back to work. We might expect them to say that. Or we might expect them to say, you know, everything that we heard about this saviour is very interesting.

And I'll definitely need to do something about that, but maybe, maybe tomorrow, not tonight, or maybe next week. We might expect them to have said something like that, but that's not what they say.

The shepherds said to one another, verse 15, let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. And so they went with haste.

[ 51 : 08 ] And found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. There's urgency. There is haste. There is focus.

There is faith in their response. They hear the good news about Jesus. They feel something of that experience of God dealing with them.

And they believe the good news. They don't just have a spiritual experience. They're saved.

I hope our assurance of salvation is not based on some spiritual experience that we had five years ago or ten years ago or twelve months ago or whenever.

That's not solid. blood. We need more than a spiritual experience. We need more than a story to tell of what happened one dark night.

[ 52 : 15 ] the shepherds they hear, they see, they experience and they say let's go.

We need to go to this Jesus. We need to go and see what we've been told. Verse 17 and when they saw it, they made known the saying that they had been told them concerning this child.

So they see, they experience, they hear, they believe, they go, and then they profess their faith. And there's the evidence of their salvation.

They profess their faith. They tell people about Jesus. And that must have been hard for the shepherds because they were shepherds.

They weren't preachers. they had no training in evangelism. They had no good reputation. In fact, they had the worst of reputations.

[ 53 : 32 ] They could have made a thousand excuses for not professing their faith, but they make no excuses and they waste no time. They believe in Jesus and they profess their faith in Jesus.

And what an impact that profession of faith had on all who heard it and on Mary as she thought about all these things. Verse 18 says, And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them.

So we see the shepherds. Yes, they've been moved by the experience, but as they go back to their work, as they go back to the place that they've come from, they're still telling people about Jesus.

they're still desperate to praise God. That's where there's assurance. That's how we know they're saved.

[ 54 : 56 ] Are you still telling people about Jesus? Are you and I still coming day by day to the Word of God, to hear what He has to say to us?

Are we still coming week by week with a desire to worship and to sing, to praise the Lord, or are we just getting dragged along to the next prayer meeting, to the next evening service?

If we are saved, then we want to glorify and praise God with every day and every talent that we've been given.

So there's some very powerful and simple lessons that we receive from the shepherds just as we finish now. The shepherds teach us that it's not enough just to have a spiritual experience.

it's not enough just to hear the good news about Jesus being the Savior. We have to act on it. If the shepherds hadn't acted on what they heard and saw, if they hadn't come to Jesus, Jesus would not have been their personal Savior, and they would not have been saved.

[ 56 : 30 ] but they did act. They believed, and having believed, they professed their faith immediately, and their profession gave glory to God, and it had an impact on all who heard it.

So what will we do this evening? we've heard the good news about Jesus. We've heard what they heard from the angels.

But will we believe in Jesus? Will we come to him as the shepherds did? That's a day-by-day thing.

And then will we profess our faith in him and own him as our Savior. As we sit at the table, then as we rise from the table, and we go to all the places that he calls us to be.

Let's pray for a moment. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for the picture that we are given in this passage, that picture of the shepherds, the least likely to hear the good news about Jesus.

[ 58 : 09 ] And yet, these are the ones that you chose to come to share the good news with first, unrighteous,! unworthy, unworthy, and yet the gospel was for them.

And we thank you that the gospel is for us. the good news about Jesus is for us. Help us, we pray, to hear it. Help us, we pray, to have more of a sense of the power and the glory of God, that we would have more of that right, reverent fear of God, which is the beginning of understanding.

God, and we pray that we, would each one of us, know that we are saved, not because we've had some experience in the dim and distant past, but because we have come, and day by day we are still coming to Jesus to glorify and praise him, and to tell others of all that he has done, and continues to do for us.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Just before we sing, we're going to sing in just a moment, but just before we sing, I want to read verse 21.

So, if you look back down in your Bibles to verse 21, this is the verse that we don't tend to spend any time looking at when we're in the Christmas story.

[ 59 : 51 ] But it's right at the end of this account that we've looked at with the shepherds. It says in verse 21, and at the end of eight days, it's joined together, you know, this is not detached, this is with everything that we've just studied, and at the end of eight days, when he, Jesus, was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

So what's going on here? Well, I'm not going to go into any details, but what was happening here was that Jesus was being physically identified with his people.

And that physical identification with his people involved the shedding of blood. One minister, I just saw a comment on Facebook that caught my eye.

Ken Larter, his name, I have no idea who he is, where he's from, I just know he gave a youth talk about 20 years ago that someone put a comment on. And he said this, the first drops of Jesus' redeeming blood were shed at the circumcision when he was just eight days old.

And yet the shedding of blood there at eight days old was pointing forward to the shedding of blood at 33 years old at Calvary where he went to the cross to take our place.

[ 61 : 43 ] Jesus was, as we'll just sing, the child who inherits all our transgressions, all our demerits on him fall.

he bled and died to be our saviour. The first drops at eight days old.

But he bled and he died to be our saviour, our redeemer. And that's what we remember if we come to the table.

So let's sing now to God's praise as we do. Mission praise 71, child in the manger, infant of Mary. outcast and stranger and glory all.

Child to enhance all our transgressions, all our demerits on him fall.

[ 63 : 20 ] Just the most holy child of salvation, gentle glory lay below.

Thou us are glorious, mighty redeemer, see him victorious over each home.

The Apostle Paul writes, And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[ 65 : 21 ] For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We thank you for all that we have been instructed in, that helps us to remember the Lord's death until he comes. It seems to be such a wrong thing in many ways, that we would have to be reminded of the vastness of your love for us.

Who has love will not remember. And yet we confess, Lord, that our minds can be so busy, our lives can be so cluttered, that we can forget, and we can doubt, and we can stray.

We remember, Lord Jesus, your body given for us. We remember your blood shed for us, that blood that is powerful, that cleansing blood.

We are sinners. But we thank you that we have received good news. the good news about the birth, and the life, and the death, and the resurrection, of Jesus, our Saviour.

[ 68 : 02 ]    The news that was announced, at the birth of Jesus, was the news, of peace with God.  
Goodwill, to all men.

Meet with us, we pray. And we ask all this, in Jesus' name, and for his sake. Amen. So on the night, that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had blessed it, and given thanks, as we have done, he broke it, and said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this, in remembrance, of me. And in the same way, he took the cup, and said, this cup, is the new covenant, in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance, remembrance, of me. For as often, as you, eat this bread, and drink the cup, you proclaim, the Lord's death, until, he comes.

[ 69 : 53 ] Heavenly Father, again, we thank you for, the wonder, of your grace, and God's riches, at Christ's expense. We thank you for the, the promise, for the assurance, of salvation.

Though, your sins are red, like scarlet, they shall be white, as snow. We thank you for, the promise, of forgiveness.

We thank you for, peace with God. We thank you for the joy, that we experience, that, is not, dependent, on the circumstances, of this world.

But, it's, a joy, that is connected, with, eternal truths. we thank you for, the fact, that you, have promised, that you will never, leave us, not forsake us.

Thank you that, we have the Holy Spirit, living within us, helping us, as we try to, understand the world, giving us, courage, when we are, afraid, bringing back, to our, our mind and memory, your word, to give us wisdom, when we don't know, which way to go.

[ 71 : 19 ] Giving us strength, to keep on, keeping on. And we pray, for that strength, that we would, keep on, keeping on. We remember, that we, we do this, we take the bread, we take the wine, we take the Lord's, supper, but we do it, only until he comes.

And may we be mindful, of that coming, we have read, and we remember, and we celebrate, the birth of Jesus, who, who came so quietly, so silently.

And yet, when he returns, every eye will see him, and every tongue, will confess, that he is Lord, and every knee, will bow, before him.

The glory, that the shepherds, saw, will be seen, in much greater measure, when Jesus, comes back. And so we pray, that we would be ready.

And we pray, that as we rise, from the table, that you would help us, to be like the shepherds, and to go out, and tell people, the good news, about Jesus.

[ 72 : 35 ] The one, who came for them, as he came for us. So bless us, we pray. We pray on, for those, whose hearts are sore.

Every time we gather, around the table, we, we are thankful, for those who are around us, but we are mindful, of those who are absent. And yet, we thank you, that when, there are those, who die of Christ, their experience, today is far better.

And so we pray, for your comfort, for those who are left. As we thank you, for the assurance, of the place, that is prepared, for those who have, gone on ahead of us.

To hear our prayers, cleanse us, from our sin, and help us, each day, to glorify, and enjoy you. For that, is your purpose, for our lives.

[illegible]

[ 74:30 ] Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.

Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies.

With the dead in posts proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King.

Strong eyes and adored, Christ the everlasting Lord.

[ 75 : 24 ] Late in time behold Him come, offspring of a merchant's womb. Build in flesh the Lord and sea, hail the incarnate Deity.

Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel. Hark the herald angels sing,  
glory to the newborn King.

Hail the heaven for Prince of Peace, hail the Son of Righteousness.

Christ and life to all He brings, rest with healing in His grace.

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the Lord. Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the Lord.

[ 76 : 38 ] To raise the sons of earth, Lord to give them second birth. Hark the herald angels sing,  
glory to the newborn King.

And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.