

Songs in the Night
A Story of Grace
Luke 2:8-20

The Shepherds:

- Basically lived outdoors – rotated between sleeping in some kind of hut and tending the flocks – it was a 24/7 job.
- Usually watched someone else's animals
- 'A despised class'
- Could not give testimony in the courts
- Probably under Rabbinic ban (couldn't go to church)

And yet God came first to them to announce the birth of His Son – not to Rome – Caesar – Herod – the Church Leadership. He came to the weak and not the powerful. He came to the unknown and not to the famous.

The Message – The Gospel is for nobodies – people who realize that they have nothing to offer or bring to God for His love and approval.

We see this throughout Jesus' ministry – He mostly ministered to 'the least of these' yet for some reason most churches see themselves as gatherings of 'the together.' And a whole lot more people than we may want to admit are left feeling alone in the despair of their own stories – in church.

Three Encouragements:

1. You are always within God's Reach to Find You

If the Shepherds' story tells us nothing else it tells us that no one is invisible to God. No one is out of His view. There is no place you can go that He cannot find you. His reach is the reach of Love.

This means that wherever you are and whatever you may have done, and in spite of the temptation to think that we may have wandered too far from His sight, you are never so far that He cannot reach you. In fact this is really at the heart of the Gospel – that God reaches us and not the other way around.

2. You are always within God's Power to Save You

Something in that exchange between Angels and Shepherds changed these guys. Suddenly they were transformed, and as with Jesus' disciples, they immediately left everything and went after Him.

And so I say to you, friend, that the Shepherds' story reminds us that God has not only the ability to reach us, but also the power to save us – and that means you.

We doubt this, don't we? I think it is because we can't save ourselves...

But by sending His Son, God demonstrated that He would spare no expense to bring you home.

3. You are always within God's Plan to use You

The Gospel takes us even further – God is not some impotent benefactor – His Spirit fills us and makes something of our lives – we see this in the Shepherds' story. For a shepherd life was a drab series of 24-hour periods of the same old thing every day.

But apart from the Gospel, what other life is any different? What difference... fields/Wall Street if you have nothing to live for [Go with this]?

For those who have been transformed by the Gospel they immediately have something to live for past the immediacy that we tend to cling to in this world: health, wealth, pleasure, education, accomplishments – all stuff that slips from between our fingers – temporary things – things that never really satisfy.

But for the shepherds, they became the first to announce the birth of Jesus to the city, the community and the world – imagine that. These social no-names and religious pariahs were Christ's first human messengers. What do you think that says about you?

This is the Gospel – it is a Song in the Night. Our lives can be darkened by sin, by stress, by sorrow, by failure, by disappointment, by loss, by fear, by tempest, by heartbreak, by ruin, by injustice, by poverty or by addiction – we can be like shepherds in the hills, outside the City in the dark and isolated from any hope for being healed and reconciled to God – and then the Gospel invades our troubled lives – Jesus is born to us – and suddenly the sky opens up and the chorus of heaven fills our souls.

You think He can't reach you. That is what we tell ourselves.

Tim Sanders – The Boss

Prayer:

- **'Find me'** – Sometimes we are like that kid who runs away from home but hopes to be found by his parents. Maybe you just need God to find you where you are...

- **‘Save me’** – If you don’t know God, this is the prayer – ask God to rescue you from the slavery of your sin and fear and to fill you with forgiveness and peace. But you may be a Christian, yet far from home...
- **‘Use me’** – Just don’t stop there. God has not called you to put you on a shelf – and you will never feel complete if you live for yourself...

The Gospel

The Gospel is not lost on these guys: Because of the time of the year, it is believed that these particular shepherds guarded the temple flocks – the sheep that would be sacrificed on the altar for the sins of the people. They pastured in hills near both Bethlehem and Jerusalem, the cities of Jesus’ birth and death. This is why they couldn’t go to church – they guarded the sheep that would be killed in church.

And in a beautiful twist, God chooses to announce the entrance of His Son to those who were tending animals that would never again need to be sacrificed – because Jesus would be the final sacrifice – their sacrifice – our sacrifice – the Lamb of God. Jesus, God’s Son, and the Precious Lamb of Christmas, would die alone in the dark – His song would be a love song – from the Cross He would sing, ‘It is Finished,’ and open Heaven’s doors to all who hear His song and flee to Him in faith.

Blaise Paschal – “Joy, Joy, Tears of Joy!”