

Christmas Eve 2015  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Rev. Amy Larson  
Luke 2: 1-20

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Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

“Do not be afraid,” the angel said to them, “for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.”

The good news that Jesus was born came first to shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night. In other words, it came first to people who had a lot to worry about, people who had to be vigilant and alert - always on the job as they tended their sheep.

We have very different lives than those shepherds but we too tend so many things. In many and various ways, we all do a lot of shepherding - especially this time of year.

- Some here have just undertaken long hours of travel with children, a task as treacherous as leading sheep up a mountain path.
  - Actually, anyone who got a child out the door and here to worship on Christmas Eve, even from a block away, just accomplished a miracle. It is hard to wait to open presents isn't it kids?
  - And *anyone* who made it through an airport, with sanity somewhat intact, deserves a medal.
- Lots of us have spent long hours tending a space and preparing a feast for our loved ones to celebrate this Christmas.
- Many are keeping a close watch on the year end financial situation at home or at the office.
- Some are needing to pay special attention to health concerns, our own or loved ones'; and some are tending to the ache of grief during this holiday season.
- Lots of us, especially in Iowa, are keeping a close watch on presidential campaigns as the caucuses approach, even as we're aware that so many other political issues need our attention.
- News headlines and images remind us of those who must tend their families in the midst of poverty, violence, and warfare; and of those who are shepherding their families while in search of refuge, in search of room for their little ones to safely lay their heads. These stories remind us how much we all need to tend to issues of justice and peace.

And like the shepherds, we are all too aware of dangers that lurk in the night, things beyond our control that pounce when we least expect them. There is so much that asks for our

vigilance, so much requiring our care. We are so often weary, worried and afraid. Who entrusted us to be shepherds anyway? And who will shepherd us?

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them and said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” Good news in the night? Great joy for all people? A Savior who will shepherd us all? Yes.

The voice of the angel drowns out the headlines. The light of Christ scatters the darkness. The wonder of this night displaces our worry and weariness.

Good news has arrived - good news of great joy for all people, good news that invites us to see with wide-open eyes that God has come. God has come into this weary world to shepherd us all, to shepherd us beyond our wants, beyond our fears, from death into new life for us and for our world.

So tonight we sing out with joy. Tonight, we set aside, for a short time at least, all our burdens and cares.

And then, at the end of this worship service, when we go to pick them up again, we find that they have already been lifted by our Savior, born this night for us all.

This Savior will tend to us, to those we love and to all people.

This Savior will set us free from the sin that ensnares us and leads us astray.

This Savior will guide us in the ways of justice and righteousness.

There will still be dangers in the night, but the Savior’s light will illumine all our darkness with hope and strength, for there is no darkness that can overcome the light of Christ.

Let your song of joy arise. Share in the wonder of this night. Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior.