

Sermon for Christmas Eve 2020 - "Good News Finds You"

Nativity of Our Lord - Christmas Eve
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Luke 2:1-20](#)

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

The first major celebration of Jesus' birth took place *in a field* - not in the temple, not in some grand cathedral, but in a field where "there were shepherds living, keeping watch over their flocks by night." The first Christmas worship happened right where those shepherds spent all their time, just as it's happening for you tonight in the place where you live and work, go to school, and keep watch in the night.

That first Christmas, great joy erupted amidst a barren landscape. Worship began as an angel appeared to announce good news - a Savior has been born for you. Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host. The angels praised God with jubilant refrains that we now sing at Christmas: "glory to God in the highest" and "peace to God's people on earth".

This joyous occasion happened in a field - a field ripe with the muck of daily life, the place where these shepherds toiled and strained and hunkered down again and again, over and over. It happened amid yet another long, lonely, sleepless night. Those shepherds had to be ever vigilant, always on alert as they kept watch over their flocks. There were so many dangers lurking in the shadows. Constant attention was required and yet everyday was the same as the day before. Their work was never done. They could never really get away and rest. Their life was one of loneliness and isolation.

Any of this sound familiar? God's people have been in these hard places before, even at Christmas.

The shepherds did not expect joy that night. They were just trying to get by, to get through. But then, good news of great joy came to them, found them right where they lived. The angel brought God's message. A savior is born who will shepherd *you* - who will carry *you*, tend and lead *you*, save *you* and all people from the sin that ensnares. Good news of great joy for the shepherds, for the world. Anthems of praise arose and surrounded them.

During that first Christmas worship in a field, the landscape of that field was transformed. Barrenness gave way to joyous hope. The place of toil and strain became hallowed ground.

The landscape of those shepherds' lives was also transformed. Routines of weariness and worry were disrupted. Hope sprang up in their hearts. They went with haste to Bethlehem to kneel before the newborn savior, to share what they'd heard about this child. They could not contain what the angels had told them. Worship arose within them. Good news fell from their lips. Then they returned home, glorifying and praising God just as the angels had done. The song of the angels lingered with them.

As they returned to their fields there were still dangers in the night. Exhaustion and anxiety remained. Yet the ground beneath their feet had changed. There was something new on the horizon.

Joy had come to live with them through all the long nights. Hope had been born for them, disrupting despair. The angels' song had become their own. The assurance of a Savior carried them, upheld them. They could move through the days and nights differently.

Dear people of God, you who are weary and worried, you who have spent too many lonely, sleepless nights with despair lurking close, tonight God's message comes to you right where you live. Good news finds you in the very place where you've been toiling and straining and keeping watch, the place where you've been hunkered down for months. Jubilant refrains erupt from your screen - the same screen that brought you presidential debates, task force briefings, scenes of violence and destruction and all manner of muck. The phone, the iPad used for doom scrolling, the laptop for endless Zoom conversations become hallowed ground.

The angels' song interrupts your tedious routines, drowns out the headlines. Anthems of praise surround you tonight. Joy comes to live with you. Hope is born again for you and for us all.

A Savior is born. A savior who shepherds you, those you love and all people. A savior whose presence transforms the barren landscape of this whole weary world.

So tonight, let your song of joy arise.

Let good news fall from your lips.

Share in the wonder of this night.

The angels' song will linger with you.

It will become your own refrain as you stand, where you live, on holy ground.