



Shepherds, Do Not Be Afraid

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Question: What do you really know about the shepherds?

Luke 2:8–14 (KJV)

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, good will toward men.”

Luke 2:15–20 (NLT)

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Fact:

The shepherds were the _____ people God chose to announce the birth of His Son.

Big Question: Why a group of shepherds?

The answer is found in two gospel stories.

Story #1: Zacchaeus

Luke 19: 1–10 (NIV)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Facts:

- Zacchaeus was a tax collector which made him an _____.
- Jesus calls him and chooses to go to his home.
- The crowd was indignant. Tongues began to wag.
- He (Jesus) has gone to be the guest of a “_____.”

Story #2: Jesus calls Levi (Matthew)

Luke 5:27–32 (NIV)

Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Facts:

- Levi was a tax collector which made him an _____.
- Jesus calls him and chooses to go to his home.
- The crowd was indignant. Tongues began to wag.
- The crowd said to Jesus: “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and _____?”

THE POINT

In both stories, Jesus goes directly to the _____
those whom the religious elite have shunned.

Look at the last verse from each story

- Zacchaeus:
For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what the lost.
- Levi (Matthew):
I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

Luke 5:32 (NIV)

Now back to the Shepherds

- In that day, shepherds were outcasts.
- The law forbade them from participating in worship at the temple because they were ceremonially unclean.
- Shepherds were forbidden to give testimony in court because they were considered to be dishonest, unreliable witnesses.

What can we learn from all this?

- God cares deeply for the “least, last and lost.”
- You and I are here—in part—because the shepherds _____.
- Not only is God with us, but God is _____ us!