



Saint John United Methodist Church
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059
stjohnky.com

Message for January 1, 2023
“The Themes of Christmas: Good News”
Speaker: Pastors Tom Grieb & Ashlee Adkins
Scripture: Luke 2:6:16-20

(Tom)

The Shepherds Respond

We could all use a little good news these days. This is a season where it seems bad news abounds.

I can't speak for the shepherds who visited Jesus the night of his birth, but I am sure they were open to a little good news as well. Boy, did they get. The angels did not disappoint.

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:10-12)

Upon hearing the good news, the shepherds had to see for themselves. We read about that in Luke 2:16-20.

So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:16-20)

A Want-to Sort of Thing

This is a season famous for to-do lists. We have had plenty to do over the past few weeks and take a collective sigh of relief that we live to tell about it. More importantly, I pray we, like the shepherds, live to tell about the great things we too have experienced.

For the shepherds, the scripture shares that they hurried off to see for themselves what the angel had told them about. They would not be denied.

Upon seeing for themselves, they could do no other but share about what they had witnessed. They couldn't contain themselves. For them, this was not a to-do, but a want-to sort of thing. It was that impactful.

Nothing Short of Amazing

Theirs was a “Go Tell It on the Mountain” sort of thing, and all who listened were amazed. Let's never forget that the story we have to share is nothing short of amazing.

The fact that some choose to turn us off shouldn't deter us. The good news about Christ is still amazing and needs to be shared. It comes to us then to share that good news. We are to share:

- From the heart.
- Out of our experience.
- And in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is more than some resolution in the New Year. It is a deep desire to fulfill the commission Christ gave to each and every one of us to *"go and make disciples."*

All the shepherds did was offer a witness of what they had seen and heard. They didn't report what someone else had experienced, but what they had experienced. Theirs was a first-person account. We are asked to share the good news about Jesus in the very same way. We are to:

- Offer our witness.
- Tell what we have seen and heard.
- And leave the results up to God.

(Ashlee)

Ready to Respond

Just like the shepherds, it comes to us to respond. We have experienced much throughout this season, and we'd do well to reflect on that. We'd also do well to consider how we might respond.

Historically, Methodists have done that in and around the New Year using what is called, *The Wesleyan Covenant Service*. In that service is a prayer that challenges us to align ourselves with God's will. It encourages us to wholly dedicate ourselves to God. It is a great prayer to pray in the New Year.

It goes like this:

The Wesley Covenant Prayer I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Giving Thanks to God

The shepherds returned from what they had seen glorifying and praising God.

That's what we do around this table. We glorify and praise God for the great thing he has done. For centuries this meal has been a meal of thanks. Eucharist is the formal name.

We are thankful today not just for the birth of Jesus but, as Paul Harvey used to say, for *"the rest of the story."* We are thankful not only for the birth of Christ, but the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

This is the good news of our faith and is celebrated right here at this table so we might find ourselves better prepared to share out there.