

Christmas Eve  
“Repeat the sounding joy”  
(Luke 2:16-17)  
December 24, 2023  
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Christmas Eve is from our Gospel reading Luke 2:17-20.

**“16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”**

So far the text...

Who did God choose to be the first Christmas visitors to see the baby Jesus? Rich nobility? priests? Saducees or Pharisees? No, shepherds. Who were these shepherds? Well, usually they were the youngest boys in the families. We remember David who was out watching the sheep when Samuel came looking for one of Jesse’s eight sons. After the youngest takes his turn at shepherding, he begins working with his father, sowing grain, planting or harvesting. And then the next youngest takes over. You had to be in pretty good shape to move a flock around to find good grass for them to eat and water.

But God chose these not so highly skilled young men to be the first hearers of the Christmas message. What did God see when He sent the angels to fill the sky with their voices announcing the birth of Jesus? God saw missionaries. But God first had to do something – take away their fear.

These shepherds were adept at slinging rocks at wolves and other predators. But they never had an encounter with an angel, much less a sky filled with angels. And

they were filled with fear as the glory of heaven broke through into their dark night. But, God had a plan for these energetic shepherds. They were going to spread the news of Jesus' birth. They were going to become repeaters of Christmas joy.

We recently installed some smoke detector sirens in the classrooms offices and church. They plug into an outlet and are linked together. So that if one is triggered all of them are triggered. But if there is a smoke detected in the classroom way on the opposite end of property, and we pray there never is this problem, how will it connect to a siren all the way over here? Repeaters. That's the technology. They bridge the gap by repeating to one another instantaneously to warn us.

Well, the angels were the first repeaters, not of bad news, but good news. The angels love rejoicing over good news, at creation, sharing good news to Mary and Zacharias, at Jesus' birth, at His resurrection, and especially they rejoice when one sinner repents.

So, they had good news to tell the shepherds. Do not fear! And the reason? First one angel spoke.

**“for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”**

And then there were other angels confirming and repeating the message with these words.

**“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”**

This message of peace from God through the baby Jesus, and God's good will toward men took away all fear and doubt. What did the shepherds say?

“Let's go!” Let's go see what the Lord has made known to us!” And they made haste as fast as those young legs could carry them!

God spoke to them through His messengers the angels, they believed, and in faith they went to see with their own eyes!

The shepherds went to go see their Shepherd! Their Shepherd who would willingly lay down His life for the sheep on the cross. The wooden manger would become a wooden cross of sacrifice. And when that happened there would be no more need for the sacrifice of sheep or goats or lambs for the sins of the people. For the Shepherd Himself is also the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

And we understand, a little bit, why God chose shepherds of sheep to be Jesus' first visitors. For animal sacrifice would be ended once and for all. Jesus has paid the price for our sins. Blessed Christmas!

This is good news of great joy not just for some people as the angels said, but for all people. This great joy which the shepherds experienced could not help but be repeated. For when they left this is what these missionaries did:

**“Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”**

The sirens of joy were repeating to the people of all that they had seen. And this message is repeated to you and me this night. The same Lord has made this known to us tonight. You have heard the good news of the birth of the Savior Jesus. And though you might not have any goats or sheep or lambs at your house, you too have seen with eyes of faith that Jesus is born. The Good Shepherd has died and risen and reigns on high.

And He has given you this Good News to ponder in your heart like Mary. And share it with your family, and make it widely known. Repeat the sounding joy of what the Savior has done for you and for all people! You have best Good News to share just like the angels and shepherds that God has given the world the gift of life in His Son Jesus – eternal life. Youngest in the family or oldest, the Holy Spirit will bless you and guide to tell others what was first announced on that first Christmas Eve. Amen.

**“The peace of God, of which the angels sang, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”  
Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**