

# Morning Worship

December 24, 2017

## Scripture Reading      Isaiah 42:1-9      Don/People

Hymn # 89      *O Come, All Ye Faithful*      Don/People

Worship Prayer Allan Lane

## Chorus # 82                    *Emmanuel*                    Don/People

## Missions Moment

## Anthem *Good Christian Men Rejoice!*

## *Worship the King Medley*   Worship Team

Hymn # 91      *Silent Night, Holy Night*      Don/People

Hymn # 103      *Away In a Manger*      Don/People

## Offering Prayer John Lewis

Offering Music Marcia Hart

## Scripture Reading      Luke 2:1-20      Allan/People

## Message      *The Angel's Song*      Allan Lane

Luke 2:1-20

Hymn # 318      *The Nail-Scarred Hand*      Don/People

Chorus # 427      *For He Alone Is Worthy*      Don/People

# The Angel's Song

Luke 2:1-20

Often stories in the Bible are told in contrast. It's certainly the case with the Christmas story. Can you think of two groups more different than the angels and the

shepherds? The angels belong to another world, but the shepherds belong to the lowest social class in this world. The angels are bright and glorious with heavenly light, but the shepherds are dirty and carry the stench of sheep. The angels knew what it was like to exist in the presence of God, but the shepherds were excluded from the very temple they provided sheep for sacrifice. The angels explode onto the scene with loud, dynamic shouts of praise and worship, but the poor shepherds are stunned and frightened into silence.

Despite these Grand Canyon like differences, in the matter of Christmas, the angels and the shepherds display a surprising similarity. They both wonder at the birth of God the Savior. For centuries Christians have celebrated with awe and joy the birth of the Savior, but the first was this odd couple of angels and shepherds. They come from very different perspectives but they come to the same conclusion: the birth of God the Savior is wondrous.

What is wonder? We experience wonder when our expectations are exceeded. Wonder is being astonished at the fantastic, jolted by splendor. Wonder is the by-product of being in the presence of something that takes your breath away. There is an element of the will in wonder. A person can choose to not be impressed.

It makes sense that the angels would be trusted with the single most important message the world was ever to hear. It's reasonable that the angels would see the glory of this event and reach a new height in praise to God. But it strains incredulity to think that God would break the news first to shepherds. The book of Numbers tells us that making someone a shepherd was one form of punishment for those who offended society. They were viewed to be thieves. A shepherd's testimony was considered so untrustworthy it would not be accepted in a court of law. This is whom God revealed and trusted to deliver the most stupendous news on earth. This would have never been imagined as even a possibility.

Sometimes you find something expensive and breakable in the small hands of a little child. You quickly seek to rescue the object because you know the child doesn't appreciate its value or understand how fragile the object is. Here are men who are involved in a way of life that prevents them from ever worshiping God at the temple. That's how little value they place on the worship of God. They are in a profession that cares so little for the commandments of God that people automatically consider them thieves and liars.

Think about it. God first trusted with the good news of the Savior with those who put a low priority on the worship of God. That boggles the mind. It is like putting thieves in charge of the bank. The riches of God were entrusted to people who regularly exchanged His glory for something lesser. It would cause wonder in the people of the first century when they heard this story.

In seeking to read the Christmas story with new eyes, it dawned on me that everything about the story is filled with wonder. The message, the messengers, and the means by which it all occurred could not have been conceived by the most creative minds of men. God was at work. It was wonderful. **How do we recover the wonder of Christmas?**

## **1. Wonder begins in the Presence of God.**

In verse 9 we are told that the shepherds are surrounded by the visible presence of God. What was true of the shepherds is true for you and me. All around us is the presence of God. The problem is life has gotten too busy or it's gotten too burdensome with care for us to see God's wondrous presence in the ordinary details of life.

Have you ever watched a butterfly being born from a cocoon? The miracle of life fills us with wonder as we watch this transformation take place. A caterpillar becomes a beautiful butterfly.

Moments of wonder like that are important to us. Maybe it's watching a baby discover its own hand for the first time or a man walking in space. These things do more than just enrich our lives. For those with eyes to see it reveals that this world is more than material, energy, and chance. There is a transcendent God whose finger prints are all over this world.

God is here. He is present and active in this beautiful world we live in. He is present and active in the people we encounter. Our eyes are meant to recognize His activity and His presence in this world. We are meant to see His greatness and goodness. It is recognizing the presence of God that restores to us our wonder. His glory surrounds us if we would but look for Him.

Could it be that one of the purposes God has for Christmas is to open our physical eyes and spiritual eyes so that we see He is here. Moments of wonder cause us to be aware of the presence of God.

## **2. Wonder Expresses the Message of God.**

God could have given this message to Caesar or Herod or even the mayor of Bethlehem. But people who are busy have a way of keeping it to themselves. Instead, God gives the message to common people to share with the world. The shepherds knew that Good News is for sharing. Their witness was natural. It was the spontaneous overflow of their hearts.

Four days after Christmas, 1995, Donny Herbert, a Buffalo, N.Y., fire fighter suffered an injury that left him comatose for 9 1/2 years. He was minimally conscious, unaware of his surroundings and unable to communicate. His sons were 14, 13, 11, and 3 years old when he slipped into unconsciousness. Then the most wonderful thing happened. After 9 1/2 years, one day suddenly Donny woke up. For sixteen hours he spoke virtually non-stop, catching up with his sons who had become men, his wife and his friends among firefighters. Then he slipped back into a similar state of unconsciousness. He finally slipped away forever in 2006.

His sixteen-hour revival astonished everyone. Some attributed it to a cocktail of drugs he was taking. Others credited prayer. His wife assigned the miracle to his will to communicate with his family one more time. For whatever reason, he had one day of clarity—a day when he was fully conscious and aware. What did he spend that day doing? He communicated the most important things to the most important people in his life.

Once a year our world has a day of clarity, December 25. Pretty much everything stops. Families gather. Businesses stand still. Traffic clears. And even the atheist thinks about a baby that was declared to be the Savior of the world. Then it seems as if the world slips back into a coma about Jesus.

When Christianity is compared to all other religions there is an interesting difference. All other religions are ethnic religions with the exception of Christianity. Hinduism is primarily Indian, Islam is Arab, Taoism is Japanese, Buddhism is Asian and Judaism is Jewish, but Christianity is not a Western religion. Jesus was not a white man. Palestine is contiguous with three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. How do you explain this stunning difference between ethnically diverse Christianity and the other religions that are centered in an ethnic people? It's because people who come to know Christ share the wonder of the Savior.

These few weeks leading up to Christmas are the greatest ones to be a witness for Christ. According to research by The Center for Missional Research, four out 10

Americans are receptive to an invitation during the Christmas season. The study showed that 42% of the people surveyed who said they are not born again would be very or somewhat likely to attend church more frequently as a result of their New Year's resolution.

Maybe the reason Christians witness so little is because they wonder so rarely at what God has done for them. Before our neighbors, friends, or coworkers slip back into a coma about Jesus, ask them to be part of your Christmas worship. Invite them to church next Sunday. Who knows? Maybe God will do something wondrous like save them from their sin.

### **3. Wonder Produces the Worship of God.**

The Bible indicates that the first response to the wonder of God is worship. Look at the first word of the angels to the shepherds in verse 14. It is not, "God has sent a Redeemer." The first response of the angels when they break the news is to worship God. A whole world needs to be saved, but the first words were not about a Savior. The first words were about the glory of the Savior of salvation. In the minds of heavenly beings God always holds first place.

To cultivate the wonder of God's presence we must place worship as the priority of our life. Don't limit that solely to times of worship experiences. The Psalmist must have been looking into a clear night, sparkling with stars, when he said: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (19:1). He is looking into the heavens and marveling at the work of the Creator God. He sees God's goodness, power, and wisdom. But more importantly he is aware he is in the presence of God, and this produces worship of God.

Real worship restores. It reawakens our wonder that God would send a Savior for sinners. Open your eyes and heart to his presence all around you. Open your mouth to share His message, and seek Him in worship, and this Christmas wonder at the birth of God the Savior.

#### **Conclusion:**

Christmas celebrates that Jesus came. He said he would come again. Are you ready for Him to come again?

Here's a wonderful old Christmas poem written by Harriet Heine

If there had been no Christmas morn,  
No Christ Child in a manger born,  
No shepherds watching in the night,  
No angel song, no star of light  
Then there would be no hope today  
For this old world where sin holds sway.  
No peace for souls weighed down with sin,  
No deep abiding joy within,  
No burdens lifted by his grace,  
No strength to run life's weary race,  
No sorrows eased, no tempests quelled,  
No fears dispersed, no doubts dispelled.  
No song of praise, no answered prayer,  
No loving Lord to guide and care.  
But friend, there was a Christmas morn  
When Christ, the Son of God, was born.  
Oh, Hallelujah, praise his name,  
Hope lives today because he came!

Something happened that has changed everything. God's angelic messengers have come with a special announcement - an announcement which has changed the world forever. The Savior of the world has finally arrived so we can:

Release our Fears - Do not be afraid  
Rejoice in the Good News - and experience great joy  
Receive our Savior - He came for you.  
Now that's Great News!

## ***The Wonder of God's Salvation!*** ***Remember the Promise***

We've seen the story many times over. *A Charlie Brown Christmas* opens with Charlie Brown talking to his best friend Linus. Charlie Brown admits there must be something wrong with him. Christmas is coming and he doesn't feel happy. Even in the midst of getting presents, sending Christmas cards, decorating a tree, and all that, he's still not happy. He just doesn't understand Christmas. Linus turns to him and says, "Charlie Brown, you are the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem." Linus then leads him down to the pond where the others are skating. "Look, Charlie Brown, those kids are forgetting their problems, so why don't you forget yours?"

Too bad it's not that simple. Just because it's Christmas doesn't mean all of our problems magically disappear like Santa up the chimney. For some, things don't get better at Christmas. Sometimes they get worse. Time, money and patience seem in short supply. Too much activity is crammed in too little time. Thanksgiving turkey is still being used as leftovers and we are supposed to be ready for Christmas. The specialness of this time is swallowed up in the hassle of it all. We must admit that there are some problems getting from where we are to Bethlehem in time for Christmas.

Getting to Bethlehem has never been easy. Consider Mary and Joseph. It's difficult for newlyweds first starting out even in the best of times. And these were not the best of times. The people of Israel are being taxed heavily to provide for the military expeditions of Caesar in Rome. The national scene threatens to bubble over into open revolt. Things are not much better in the little town of Nazareth. With a population of around 200 an over-worked and under-paid carpenter is barely able to provide for his new wife who is now with child. The circumstance surrounding the marriage and pregnancy has become the grist for the local gossip mill. To add to their troubles, Caesar Augustus has decided to collect a new tax that will be assessed in the place of family origin. For Mary and Joseph that means traveling to Bethlehem approximately 100 miles away. So in her ninth month, they make the week's journey only to find out that there is no room at the Inn. And you think your Christmas is going to be tough. There's no way to romanticize that first Christmas. The shepherds may have got the singing angels, but all Mary and Joseph got was the sweat, the straw and the stench.

Well, that isn't entirely true. They got something else. They got a promise. "What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins...and they will call Him Immanuel - which means, "God with us." How did they put up with all the hassles, the snide remarks, the headaches and the heartaches that went with that first Christmas? They held on to the promise. God promised that He was at work in their world. At work behind the scenes of history - bringing everything together at just the right time, in just the right place, in just the right way. When little baby Jesus was laid in that manger bed of straw - the promise was realized - God is with them. And for Mary and Joseph it was worth it.

So my fellow Charlie Browns, as we make our way to the manger bed, we may not be able to forget our troubles, but we can hold on to the promise. God is with us. There is for us a quiet place to go. We can go to a dark and drafty cave outside of Bethlehem and discover once again the promise lain in straw. Nestled in a rough manger was the one born to save His people from the sin, the sickness, the suffering and sorrow of this season and all the seasons to come. This is why He came. Glory to God in the highest!

God Bless You!

Bro. Allan

## Merry Christmas, Calvary!

We want to wish a blessed Christmas for each of you. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless you in the coming New Year. We love you so much. Thank you for loving us, praying for us, and supporting us throughout these years of service. We will continue to pray for you and lift you before the Lord, as we continue to seek the Lord's direction in our own lives. I will always sing the Lord's praise, for He (and you as the church) has been good to me.

"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for He has been good to me." Psalm 13:3-6

Tim, Sharon, Sarah, Daniel, and Isaac Waters

### Opportunities For Service

Living out Your Spiritual Commitment . . . and Fulfilling Christ's Divine Plan

#### Sunday, December 24, 2017

Choir Rehearsal.....9:00 am

Sunday School.....9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: John Lewis, Gary Yarbrough,  
Joseph Coats, ? ? ? ?

Alternate: Larry McKahan

Christmas Eve Service 6:30 pm

#### Wednesday, December 27

Prayer / Bible Study.... 6:30 pm

Worship Team ..... 6:30 pm

#### Sunday, December 31, 2017

Choir Rehearsal..... 9:00 am

Sunday School ..... 9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: ? ? ? ?, Ken Nice,

Fred Kerns, Don Sharp

Alternate: ? ? ? ?

Evening Worship.....6:30 pm

### **Wednesday, January 3**

Prayer / Bible Study ....6:30 pm

Worship Team ..... 6:30 pm

### **Up-Coming Events.....**

**December 24 — Christmas Eve Service 6:30 pm**

**December 25 — Christmas**

**December 31 — New Year's Eve Service 6:30 pm**

**January 1, 2018 — Happy New Year!**

### **GROW Team**

Commit to **GROW!** **Everyone make a contact!** Invite someone to Bible Study and Worship this week. ☺

### **Sunday Nights**

Please join us tonight, Sunday, December 24, for a Christmas Eve Service at 6:30 pm.

### **Wednesday Night Prayer and Bible Study**

Come pray for the direction of our church. Also, we have been experiencing an online Bible Study with Max Lucado entitled ***Because of Bethlehem***. Please plan to attend and pray at 6:30 pm.

### **New Year's Eve**

We will have an early evening New Year's Eve celebration this year starting at 6:30 pm. Plan to come and bring some snacks. We'll have some fellowship while remembering the past year and ask God's blessing for the year to come.

### **Lottie Moon Christmas Offering**

This month we will emphasize this offering for International Missions. Our church goal is \$1,700.00. So far to date we have received \$1,345.00.

### **CHRISTMAS CARD BOXES IN THE HALLWAY**

You may exchange Christmas Cards among your church family by placing your cards in the boxes in the hallway. Then contribute the postage you save to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering!

# January Bible Study

More details will be coming soon. Begin reading 1 Peter to be prepared for this study.

## *For the Record-*

### Attendance: December 17, 2017

Sunday School.....	29
Visitors.....	3
Total.....	32
Contacts Made.....	0
Morning Worship.....	54
Children's Worship.....	12
Sunday Night (McCarthy).....	10
Wednesday Night .....	13

### Financial Record:

Weekly Budget .....	\$ 2,286.39
Offering Received ...	\$ 734.75
Lottie Moon.....	\$ 1,345.00
Long Family-Nov.....	\$ 181.00

### Offering Received by Mail:

### December Counting Team:

Don Beavers and Jordan Lane

### December Van Driver:

George Burgess

Remember to call 232-3747 **before 8 am** if you need a ride.

### December Member Birthdays:

03 ... Brent Fortune  
08 ... Madeline Swink  
09 ... Allison Adkinson  
11 ... George Ferbert  
15 ... George Burgess  
16 ... Addison Leichti  
16 ... Doris Richardson  
19 ... Jessica Kirkpatrick  
20 ... Leona Reynolds  
20 ... Brenda Burgess  
23 ... Joseph Coats

### December Anniversaries

Bill and Alva Lou Schottel  
December 22, 1962

### Prayer Requests ...

Peggy & Gary Fewins—Peggy's health  
Rick and Mary Bruntmeyer  
Rachael & Erin Molloy and Family  
Brigida Winans—heel surgery  
Mike Green—knee recovery  
Arlette Duty—carpal tunnel  
Gina Harr—surgery recovery

Joe Coats—pacemaker  
Don Beavers—heart and health  
Curtis Conard—surgery in January  
Emily Jones & baby  
Chad Bradford—heart surgery  
Cynthia Burdick—cancer recovery  
Karissa and Matt Long and family  
The Waters Family—guidance  
Stephanie & Jason Terpack  
Shawna Hughes—home isolation  
Gary and Sharon Yarbrough  
Larry Danner—cancer  
Rosella Davis—Flo Conard's sister  
Mary Sharp's brother-in-law Jim  
Bill Clinton—Don and Mae's son  
Troy Griswold—cancer treatment  
Lisa Bowers—Jack and Flo's daughter  
LoLeta Middleton—strength  
Elvera's daughter & daughter-in-law  
Zella Davis —Doris Richardson's sister  
Rev. A. B. Brown      Betty Campbell  
George Ferbert      Kevin Duty  
Ellen Blanton      Lois Ulmer  
Jim Winans      Nellie Reynolds  
Madeline Swink      Ann Riddle  
Kathryn Beavers      Keon McKahan  
Louanne Laurence      Leona Reynolds  
Jozy Winans      Kenny Duty  
Pat Means      Buddy Means  
Bill & Juanita      Debbie Sands  
Pat Puckett      Judy Anderson  
Brenda Burgess      Roscoe Lane  
Carolyn Houts      Tim Izer  
Nickolay Nazaruk, Peski 2 Church  
David and Deborah Grace  
Our Nation and Leaders  
Our Military Service people  
Terrorism in our world

**Today's Prayer Requests ...**

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**Our Nation and our Leaders ...**

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**Five More New Families...**

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