



Mustard Seed Children's Summary for December 21, 2008
Released on Wednesday, December 17, 2008

"The Shepherds' Good News" (Christmas)

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 107:1-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-20

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 2:8-20

MEMORY VERSE: "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20)

Luke 2:8-20

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 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.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

To teach that God's way is for those who know the good news about Jesus to pass it on to others.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. The shepherds did not keep the good news to themselves.
2. The shepherds communicated the good news everywhere they went.
3. God's plan is for each of us to communicate the gospel in some way.

PLANNING LESSON AIDS:

For Beginning the Lesson, find pictures of Mary, Elisabeth, and the shepherds.

For Telling the Lesson, find a picture of the nativity scene. Be sure to pass up any nativity scene that shows the wise men, since they were not present at the manger.

For Telling How to Live, make two flash cards: "Come" and "Go and tell."

For Helping to Remember, every student will need a 9-by-12-inch sheet of green construction paper. Draw a circle on each, using as a pattern the largest plate that can be fitted onto the paper. Use a smaller plate to draw a second circle within the first. Provide crayons and safety scissors (blunt tip).

For the Lesson Activity, a word search is included with words from the lesson; make a copy for each student.

LESSON BACKGROUND:

Time: 6 or 5 B.C.

Place: Bethlehem

Bethlehem was a small town near Jerusalem – probably about five miles to the south. During Jesus' time, shepherds near Bethlehem would provide lambs for those visiting Jerusalem for the Passover. Being a shepherd was a difficult job and was considered to be one of the lowest levels of employment.

Shepherds were either children of the owner of the flock, other relatives needing a job or hired men. They worked long hours caring for and protecting the flocks. In this week's lesson, the shepherds, while maintaining their daily routine, were watching over their flocks on a quiet night in Bethlehem. This quiet and peaceful scene is suddenly changed as the shepherds are visited by an angel and the "glory of the Lord" shines about them as they learn the good news of the Saviour's birth!

TEACHER'S NOTES:

The shepherds of Bethlehem have played an important role in Christmas pageants for generations. The reason, of course, is that they played such a key role in the events surrounding Christ's coming. But who were these men? We are never told their names.

On the other hand, who they were really does not matter, does it? The important thing is that they fulfilled the role God had for them at the time. These nameless men received word of Christ's birth from the lips of an angel, and they passed along that good news to others, just as God wanted them to do. They did their job.

God planned for the news of His Son's birth to be spread far and wide. Later on, Jesus would tell His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). That was His plan.

The shepherds of Bethlehem fit into that plan. They "did it God's way" when they spread the news that the Saviour had been born. By doing God's will, the shepherds became another link in the chain of events that brought the gospel down to us. One could say we of the twenty-first century owe a debt of gratitude to these unnamed men.

The boys and girls will learn that God's way requires that they first come to Jesus too. They will learn that His way also includes a lifetime of doing what the shepherds did next, letting others know. You will want to gear what you stress to the needs of the class.

What do the children need most? To understand that God has a lifelong plan for them? Then let them know what that general plan is. He wants to use them in some way to bring the gospel to others.

Does it seem most of the class is still on the way to understanding and faith? Then help these to see that their first step, like that of the shepherds, is to come to Jesus themselves. The shepherds first heard and believed the news themselves. *They* found the Christ. After that they told others—and we do not even know their names.

Let us play the role God wants us to play in the spread of the gospel. What does it

matter if we are known or unknown?

This is a good news lesson. Teach it with joy!

BEGINNING THE LESSON:

We have started to talk about different people who believed God's way is the best way to do things. Mary was one of those people. (Show Mary.) When she learned that God had chosen her to be the mother of His Son, Jesus, she said a happy yes to what He wanted.

Then there was Elisabeth. (Show Elisabeth.) Remember Elisabeth? God chose her to be the mother of John (the Baptist). An angel said John would grow up and make people ready for Jesus. Elisabeth thanked God for Mary and said her baby was the special one God promised to send. Elisabeth believed God's way of doing things was best too.

There were some other important people in the Christmas story, and we do not even know their names. They went God's way too. They did just what He wanted them to do. Those people were the shepherds. (Show shepherds.)

TELLING THE LESSON:

The work of shepherds is to take care of sheep, all day and all night. Shepherds have to make sure the sheep have grass and water and are safe all the time.

One night, not far from the town of Bethlehem, a group of shepherds was camping out under the stars with their sheep. They were making sure no lions or bears came in the dark to make trouble.

Those shepherds were probably just sitting there in the grass, talking to each other. But then, all at once, a bright light was shining all over the hillside. And, oh, what was *that*? An angel was standing in the light!

The shepherds were very, very afraid. Now what would happen? But right away the angel said, "Do not be afraid." He wanted the shepherds to know he was not going to hurt them.

"I am bringing good news," he said. "Happy news. Over in Bethlehem a baby has been born. That baby is your Saviour, Christ the Lord. He will be lying in a manger. That is how you will know which baby He is."

Suddenly what looked like hundreds of other angels were there too, all happily praising God. "Glory to God in the highest!" they said.

Now, those shepherds knew what God had promised. They knew He was going to send a very special Person into the world someday. Could God's angel really be saying that special Person had come?

When the angels had gone, the shepherds looked at each other. They said, "Let us go to Bethlehem right now and see what the Lord has told us about."

The shepherds did have sheep to take care of, so they may have left somebody behind to do that, but the rest of them went down the hill to Bethlehem as fast as they could go.

They knew the baby would not be in a house. The angel said they would find Him in a manger, and a manger was an animal's feeding box.

So they went to the place where the animals ate. And there He was, with Mary His mother and Joseph. (Show nativity scene.) They had found Him lying in a manger.

We do not know how long the shepherds stayed at the manger. After a while they would have to go back to their sheep, but when they did go back, they went thanking God for the wonderful news the angel had brought them. God's special one was really here! The shepherds had found the Saviour, and they were glad.

But the shepherds did not keep the good news to themselves. They began to tell other people here, there, and everywhere what the angel said. A Saviour had been born, and He was Christ the Lord!

This part of Christmas makes me think of *Easter*. When Jesus' friends came to His grave, Jesus was gone because He was alive again, but an angel was there. That angel said,

"Come and see. He is not here. And go quickly and tell."

Come and see. Go and tell. That is just what the shepherds did. They came to Jesus themselves, and then they went to tell others.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE:

Come and see. Go and tell. That is what God wants us to do too. First we come to Jesus ourselves. (Show "Come.") We believe that He died to save us from our sins and that He came alive again. But then we do not keep that good news to ourselves. We spend the rest of our lives letting other people know. We go and tell. (Show "Go and tell.")

So always remember there are two things to do. Come to Jesus yourself by telling Him you want Him to take away your sins. (Show "Come.") Have you done that yet? If you never have but you want to, talk to me after class. I think I can help you.

After we have done the "come" part, let us not forget to "go and tell." (Show "Go and tell.") Shall we ask the Lord right now to make us good tellers of the good news about Jesus? (Teacher, lead in prayer.)

HELPING TO REMEMBER:

Let the children cut out their wreaths. Punch a starting spot for them to cut out the centers. On one side they should print "Come and see" and on the other "Go and tell." Allow time to trim and decorate the wreaths. Show them how to cut a wavy edge to provide a wreath effect.

EXPLAINING THE MEMORY VERSE:

"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20)

These shepherds were the ones who were out on the hillside with their sheep when they saw an angel. They heard him say that the Saviour had been born in Bethlehem. Then they saw a great crowd of angels. The shepherds heard those angels thanking God for what He had done. They heard the angels saying good things about God.

After that the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem, where they found the stable and saw Joseph and Mary and Baby Jesus Himself.

As the shepherds went back to their sheep, now they too were thanking God and saying good things about Him because of what their ears had heard and their eyes had seen. Now they too had some very good news to tell.

CONCLUSION:

The shepherds in our lesson believed the message of the angel of the Lord and went to see the things that were told to them. Because of their simple faith, they heard the message, and they responded. They went to find Jesus, and then they left glorifying and praising God. They did not keep the good news to themselves, but told others of the birth of the Saviour.

Let's be like the shepherds! After learning the good news and coming to Jesus, we must play our part. We must not keep the good news to ourselves. Go and tell others!

PRAYER:

Father God, thank you for sending the Saviour into the world. Help us to be like the shepherds and be good tellers of this good news, in Jesus' name, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "**Real Faith Means Doing Good**" and focuses on the beginning ministry of John the Baptist. Study Luke 3:1-20 in anticipation of next week's lesson.

Lesson Summarized by:

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WORD SEARCH

The Shepherds' Good News" (Christmas) (Luke 2:8-20)

Find each of the following words.

GLORY

BETHLEHEM

PEACE

JESUS

AFRAID

PRAISE

ANGEL

MANGER

MARY

SWADDLING

TIDINGS

JOSEPH

SAVIOUR

SHEPHERDS

EARTH

FLOCK

E H S O A V O D H J P M E A A D E A R M U D P
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SOLUTION TO WORD SEARCH (The Shepherds' Good News, Luke 2:8-20)

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