

### Lectionary passages:-

**Isaiah 62 v1-12;**

**Psalm 97 ;**

**Titus 3 v4-7;**

**Luke 2 8-20 .**

Today is last Sunday of our calendar year. The Sunday after Christmas is when most churches have poor attendance. Our message today is from Luke, where we have the full sweep of the Christmas story.

The Shepherds, outcasts of society, are out in the fields away from family and miss out on the chance to worship at the Temple or at their local synagogue. The sheep are their priority. It could be a lonely life and most would have forgotten about them.

Remember when God asked Samuel to choose a son of Jesse to be King. All his sons parade in front of him, they looked fine upstanding men, but Samuel asked if this was all the boys. Jesse said there is one more they seem to have forgotten. He was the youngest son far away working as a shepherd. David was overlooked, forgotten! BUT God does not overlook anyone. God sees us all, is aware of us all, however isolated or unimportant, comforting especially in times of isolation!

It is the Shepherds who first hear the good news of the birth of the Messiah. It is they and not the obvious candidates who are treated to a choir of Angels singing in the heavens. It is the Shepherds who are first invited to take a step of faith towards Jesus. They are the ones who hear the Angels sing Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.

Go! They are told, find him in a manger that is a cattle feeding trough, in a bare, cold stable. Look, this is the one who is going to be the saviour of the world, the one who will rescue us from our sins who will put right the wrongs of many centuries. He is the one who will truly bring peace, God's plan for the human race began in Bethlehem – the Shepherds were the first to see it.

Many think the Shepherds were looking after the sheep destined to be the sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. These sheep would be killed for the sins of the people and enable forgiveness to be enjoyed, they are going instead to see the true lamb of God as John the Baptist calls Jesus, who takes away the sins of the world. It is quite fitting the Shepherds are the first to see the Lamb of God!

And they went! They could have ignored the Angels, considering the story to be farfetched, and impossible, or just been a bit lazy! They may even have felt slighted that their job was to be replaced by this Jesus in the fullness of time! Why should they be the first to hear! Preposterous they might have said!

## CAREY NOTES 27TH DECEMBER 2020

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I believe we have all been spoken to by God about Jesus. Like the Shepherds and like all who are presented with God's voice/call, we have a choice to make. We stay where we are, ignoring the message, even refusing to believe, or believe and do nothing about it.

The Shepherds go to meet Jesus, they find him just as the Angel had said wrapped in strips of cloth with Mary and Joseph at his side. They believe the message of the Angels and they trust this is the message of God to their generation, so they do not keep it to themselves but go to spread the word the Angels had told them about Jesus to everyone they meet.

We are all called to have the faith, hope and trust the Shepherds had. To see Jesus as God's answer to the world's problems, then after our own act of worship and praise, to spread the word about what God is about, this is as relevant and necessary as we move into 2021 as it was in the year Jesus was born.