

CAROLING THROUGH CHRISTMAS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Luke 2.8-20 | December 15, 2019
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue keeping tune with the songs of the season, caroling our way through Christmas.

This week we lift our voices to ask that age-old question, "What Child Is This?"

II. Connecting with One Another

What's your favorite Christmas carol? Why?

III. Study the Text

a. Read Luke 2.1-7.

This census was most likely used by the Romans to procure taxes from the Jewish people, whose land they occupied. Return to their ancestral home would fit with Jewish cultural practice, though the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem is around 90 miles and took three days!

How would you feel making this trip to pay taxes to occupying forces while you or your spouse was pregnant!?

b. Luke doesn't make as explicit a connection with Bethlehem as in Matthew 2.6, but there is the allusion to the birthplace of King David, perhaps echoing Micah 5.1-2.

Why do you think this is important for the gospel writers to point out?

What point are they trying to make? How does it align with verses 1-3?

c. In all likelihood, Joseph and Mary welcomed Jesus in the lower level of a home, be that a stable or cave, where animals were usually housed. Any insinuation of a lengthy search for a place to stay or an indifferent hotelier is missing. Darrell Bock concludes, "The contrast between the birth's commonness and the child's greatness could not be greater. The promised one of God enters creation among the creation. The profane decree of a census has put the child in the promised city of messianic origin. God is quietly at work, and a stable is Messiah's first throne room."

Where have you recently seen God "quietly at work" in an unlikely setting?

d. Read Luke 2.8-14.

Luke's narration shifts from Jesus' birth in the manger among animals to shepherds remaining with their flocks through the night.

What do you think of these shepherds? What would you imagine is their place on the social ladder?



Why would the angels announce Jesus' birth to them? And why would Luke tell us about it?

- e. How do the shepherds initially respond? Why?
How do the angels instead direct their response? Why?
- f. Like Luke, the angels declare that Jesus has been born "in the town of David," then ascribe three titles to him.
What do you think these titles meant to these shepherds?
What do these titles mean to you? Try using your own words to define them:
Savior:

Lord:

Messiah/Christ:

- g. Reread verse 10. Who should experience great joy?
- h. Read Luke 2.15-20.
How do the shepherds respond to the news of Jesus' birth?
How is God calling you to follow their example this Christmas season?
- i. The shepherds interacted with angels. We (usually) interact with mere fellow human beings.
How does the source of our news affect our response to it?
- j. We read that Mary "treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." The original Greek word means to put in context, to connect the dots, to think something through thoroughly.
How does Mary's doing so give us a wonderful example of faith?
- k. Again, Darrell Bock concludes, "The story is not told so that hearers can identify with the new mother and father or enjoy a story of hope, of a touching birth in humble surroundings. The birth has value because of whose birth it is. The shepherds have found that the angel's words were true, that events have transpired just as they had been told."
Where have you seen the truth of God's Word? And how does that inspire you to share his good news with others?

IV. Pray

- a. Thank God for the gift of His Son Jesus, who is our Savior, Lord, and Messiah,
- b. Ask that God's Holy Spirit would so inspire you with the good news this Christmas season that you would share it with others, inviting them to life in God's family,
- c. Lift up those you know who are in need this Christmas, that God, His church, and you would help provide for their needs in the name of Jesus.

