

## The Shepherd's Heart: Responding to Christmas

Dr. John Carmichael

[Luk 2:15-18 NASB95] 15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds [began] saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

- The Christmas story as described in Luke 2 includes great details about a group of shepherds.
- The shepherds had a unique role in witnessing and responding to the birth of Jesus.
  - First to hear: The shepherds were the first to receive the news of Jesus' birth from angels.
  - First to meet: The shepherds were the first to meet with the baby Jesus.
  - First evangelists: The shepherds were the first to spread the good news of Jesus to others.

How do we respond to the Good News of Christ's birth, as demonstrated by the shepherds?

Here are four responses God wants us to incorporate in our lives today.

### I. Immediate Obedience to God's Word (Luke 2:15)

- a. [Luk 2:15 NASB95] 15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds [began] saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."
- b. The shepherds' response to the angelic message: urgency and obedience.
- c. They had faith in God's message, illustrating how they did not question or delay.
- d. [Jas 1:22 NASB95] 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.
- e. [Psa 119:60 NASB95] 60 I hastened and did not delay To keep Your commandments.
- f. Be receptive and responsive to God's guidance in your lives.

### II. Sought a Personal Encounter with Jesus (Luke 2:16)

- a. [Luk 2:16 NASB95] 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.
- b. The shepherds experienced the reality of Jesus' birth personally.
- c. Transformation comes from a personal encounter with Christ. Jacob's wrestling match changed his life. Genesis 32:22–32. He never walked the same after that encounter.
- d. Paul's encounter caused him to continue to seek to know Jesus more. [Phl 3:10 NASB95] 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;
- e. Any good fruit of our life will come through an ongoing encounter with Jesus. [Jhn 15:4 NASB95] 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither [can] you unless you abide in Me.
- f. Seek a personal relationship with Jesus, make time for Him in your daily life.

### III. Proclaimed the Good News (Luke 2:17-18)

- a. [Luk 2:17-18 NASB95] 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.
- b. The shepherds are the first evangelists, sharing the news of the Savior with others.

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- c. This is a result of the natural outflow from true joy and encounter with Christ: sharing His story.
- d. The infilling of the Holy Spirit is for us to witness about Jesus to the world around us. [Act 1:8 NASB95] 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
- e. Always be ready to share the Gospel. Very simply, what is God doing in your life. It should a be natural flow. Just talk about what God is doing in your life. [1Pe 3:15 NASB95] 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always [being] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
- f. God has called us to spread the message of Jesus in our region, being witnesses of His love and truth. Clarksville will be reached in 2025!

### **IV. Glorified and Praised God.**

- a. [Luk 2:20 NASB95] 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.
  - b. After their encounter and witness, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God.
  - c. Praise to God should be an intentional aspect to healthy Christianity. [Col 3:16-17 NASB95] 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms [and] hymns [and] spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.
  - d. Praise is how God wants us to encounter Him. [Psa 100:4-5 NASB95] 4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving [And] His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.
  - e. Our lives should be filled with praise and worship that comes from our experiences with God.
- **God is calling us to live a life with immediate obedience to His Word, a personal encounter with Christ, proclaim the Good News, and allow praise to flow from us to Him.**