

## THE FIRST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Luke 2:1-17 (ESV)

- Christmas is probably the happiest season of the year
- Millions of people around the world celebrate this special day
- We must confess that not everybody celebrates with the same motivation
- Many who celebrate are caught up in the secular and commercial
- But there is something special about this time of year.
- For Christians, Christmas means a lot more than gifts and decorations
- Dr. R. G. Lee who pastored Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis for many years once said, "Christmas is the celebration of eternity's interaction with time and space: "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son" (NKJV Gal 4:4).
- The first Christmas celebration was held because of the birth of Jesus
- If there had been no Christ child, there would be no Christmas - and the world would be much poorer without it
- Even those who celebrate totally apart from the truth are acknowledging the importance of the season
- Today I want us to go back to that night over 2,000 years ago when Jesus was born
- It was a night of praise and worship and celebration – the night of the first Christmas pageant

Luke tells us about that first Christmas – READ Luke 2:1-17 (ESV)

### I. THE CONGREGATION

1. Who were they?
2. Luke 2:8 (ESV)  
*"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night".*
3. A remarkable statement!
4. The announcement of the greatest event in history came first of all to shepherds - common folk – everyday - hardworking people
5. Shepherds did not have it easy
6. It is possible that these shepherds did not even own the sheep they were watching over!

7. Hired hands
8. The greatest news in all the world didn't come first to the high priest - the Sanhedrin - or the religious hierarchy of the day
9. It didn't come first to Roman political leaders, Pilate or King Herod
10. It came to shepherds out on the hills of Bethlehem
11. Why did God choose to make this announcement first of all to lowly shepherds?
12. God uses the weak, the lowly, the powerless

1 Cor. 1:27-29 (ESV)

<sup>27</sup> *But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;*

<sup>28</sup> *God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.*

2 Cor 4:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup>*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

13. God often works that way – through the lowly rather than the powers that be
  - a. When God wanted to choose a leader for Israel, He found Moses on the back side of the desert tending somebody else's sheep
  - b. When He chose a king, a man after his own heart, He chose the youngest son from the smallest tribe - a shepherd boy named David
  - c. When Jesus chose the 12 disciples He chose tax collectors and sinners and fishermen
14. It does seem that God focused on the lowly, the humble, the weak and powerless

### II. THE PREACHER

1. Notice the preacher in this first Christmas service
2. Luke tells us (Luke 2:9 ESV)  
<sup>9</sup> *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.*
3. That first service was a glorious event!

4. The glory of the Lord was revealed and the shepherds responded with reverential awe
5. This is a recurring theme in the Bible where man truly encounters God (see Isaiah 6)
6. It was the experience of the shepherds at the first Christmas pageant

### III. THE MESSAGE

1. Luke 2:10-11 (ESV)
 

<sup>10</sup> *And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*
2. At the moment of the shepherds' greatest fear they received the greatest message of comfort –
3. What was the message? - *"Fear not!"*
4. Fear robs people of peace, contentment, joy, and hope
5. The message of the first Christmas was repeated often by Jesus (16 times Jesus said – *"fear not, do not be afraid, do not fear"*)
6. Fear is a real problem
7. What is the antidote for fear?
8. The antidote for fear is the message of Christmas - *"unto you is born a Savior, Christ the Lord"*
9. Paul said, *"For God gave us a spirit not of fear; but of power and love and self control"* (2 Tim 1:7)
10. The Bible says, *"Perfect love casts out fear"*
11. *"Fear not"* is the negative; following that the angelic messenger emphasized the positive aspect of the Christmas message – *"good tidings of great joy"*
12. The first Christmas message was one of great joy
13. Why?
14. Because Jesus came as the Savior Christ the Lord to provide a way out of darkness and fear
15. Later Jesus would say, *"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"* (Jn 16:33 NKJV)
16. The Christmas message is about victory and joy

### IV. THE RESPONSE

1. The shepherds heard the Christmas message
2. Perhaps the first to hear outside the family
3. But hearing was not enough
4. This is a neglected part of the Christmas story
5. These lowly, powerless, common shepherds were chosen to hear, but they had to act upon what they heard on that first Christmas night long ago
6. It was a great thing to hear the news about the birth of the Christ Child, but mere knowledge was not enough
7. There was the need for response and they immediately made a decision
8. Luke 2:15-16 tells us . . . (ESV)
 

<sup>15</sup> *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.*
9. The scripture also tells us that the shepherds immediately shared their experience (Luke 2:17) and that they *"returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen"* (Luke 2:20)

### CONCLUSION:

1. The first Christmas pageant had a profound impact on the shepherds
2. They were transformed by what they had seen and heard
3. What about you?