

The Faces of Advent

Responding with Joy and Simplicity – The Shepherds

One of the most commonly overlooked events in the story of the nativity is the annunciation of Christ's birth to the shepherds ([Luke 2:8-20](#)). First, the shepherds hear the Angel's message to the shepherds: that "unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" ([Luke 2:11](#)). Alongside that message, they hear the host of angels proclaiming and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" ([Luke 2:14](#)).

The Angel appeared to Mary and Joseph, who were entrusted with watching over the baby Jesus. However, the appearance of the Angel to the shepherds is fascinating. Speaking of the shepherds, St. John Chrysostom says, "But the Angel went not to Jerusalem, sought not for Scribes and Pharisees, (for they were corrupt and tormented with envy.) But these were simple men living in the ancient practices of Moses and the Patriarchs." Just as Christ humbled Himself and was born in the manger, so also did the Angel appear to those who were simple and lowly: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" ([Matthew 5:8](#)).

It is no surprise then that in his festal letter, His Holiness Pope Tawadros asks us to look for Christ not in places of wealth, luxury, or grandeur, nor in the centers of power and comfort we often expect. Instead, Christ is revealed in places and people who are marked by simplicity and humility, such as Bethlehem, an obscure village, or even the Shepherds. It is in these simple and unexpected places and people that Christ chooses to dwell.

Immediately following this announcement from the Angels, the shepherds left *with haste* for Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus lying in the manger ([Luke 2:15-16](#)). Then, once they saw the baby Jesus, they proclaimed what the angels had told them ([Luke 2:17](#)). Finally, when they returned to their hometown, they glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen ([Luke 2:20](#)).

Again, they responded immediately with joy and haste, praising and glorifying God. This response is seen multiple times. For example, after the Annunciation of the Birth of Christ to St. Mary, she went to Elizabeth's house and magnified God (the Magnificat) ([Luke 1](#)). In Acts 2, immediately after the Apostles received the Gift of the Holy Spirit, they started to preach about Christ ([Acts 2](#)). Subsequently, as receivers of the words and blessings of God, we ought to praise God: "Let everything that has breath praise the name of the Lord" ([Psalm 150:6](#)). The shepherds show us how to receive God: with joy and simplicity.

In short, the shepherds offer us several valuable lessons. They teach us to remain lowly and humble of heart, and to receive God with haste, joy, and glorification.

Sources

- Bible, ESV
- Bible, NKJV

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- Catena Bible
- Papal Message of Nativity Feast 2024, Pope Tawadros II