**12/25/22**

**SAME STORY, SECOND VERSE(ION)**

**LUKE 2:[1-7] 8-20**

Today we got the Same Story, but we got the Second Verse(ion). Yes, there was no mistake made! We read the same exact Gospel Reading as our Christmas Eve Service yesterday. However, that did not make it any less important did it? This is what I will call our proverbial huh moment. This is where we might have missed a point or two, or even heard the story but thought we missed something. We get to sharpen our perspective here today. Thanks be to God for that! Huh?!?!

Just like a song, the second verse(ion) gives us the first chance to shed a new light on the chorus or refrain. When we heard the Gospel Reading again today, I hope we heard the same message as yesterday. However, I hope that we heard it and seen it in a different manner that allowed for our continued exploration, and for that very matter, our continued hunger for the truth and awesomeness. Perspective is all too important, and yesterday we were blessed to hear from Pastor Elliott. Now, today we get to explore my take on things. No matter who the Preacher or Presenter is for that fact, we still got two shots to explore what this season of Christmas is all about. We have marched together through Advent with haste to get to this very point! Christ has been born! The game has changed! Every narrative out there prior has been changed forever too!

Now, for those of you that know me well enough, you know that I like to stop by a brewery or two on occasion. Sometimes I even like to have a few beers at home to relax and unwind. That is very similar to what Martin Luther did back in his day for sure as well. Good company to be in right?!?! So, who would have figured that when I stopped at 7 Mile Brewery on Friday I would get the chance to run into some familiar folks? We got the opportunity to drink, as well as catch up and talk. We also watched over the sheep, or for this specific stories purpose, Max their Labradoodle. We talked about several things, and we even brought up our Christmas Eve plans. We confirmed that we would see one another at church the following day.

So, where exactly am I going with this? Well, if you can imagine this was the same setting we were provided with in our Gospel Reading today. The Shepherds were out in the field, or the brewery, and they had just pretty much finished up their respective work days. They were relaxing in the evening, probably sitting around a fire and having some wine. They were probably just sitting there shooting the breeze. Then, all of a sudden there are all these bright lights, and this angel appears out of nowhere and is talking to them. Quite frankly they were probably wondering what was in their wine at this moment, or if the sun had really gotten the best of them that day out in the fields. However, it was indeed the glory of the Lord shining all around them. They got the opportunity to hear this message from the angel about this magnificent thing that just happened. They are even told to go check it out for themselves! All they had to do was go to Bethlehem, and in a manger they would find the Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord was born!

Now, of course they had a few decisions here. Just like when one sheep wanders off, they can make plans, or take quick action and bring it back into the fold. They had to make a decision on what they were going to do. They got told this awesome news. Now, they could have just slept it off and waited until day break to go and check things out. Heck, for that fact they might have even thought to themselves that they needed to sleep it off to see if they experienced the same thing and were not hallucinating and in need of sleeping off their heat exhaustion or drunkenness. However, in their heart of hearts they knew what they saw and experienced was real. They could not just let it be news, or someone else’s experience. These shepherds really wanted to go and see this for themselves. They wanted to see how magnificent it really was!

Now, mind you they got told very little in regards to any sort of specific location or directions. They also did not have a GPS or smart phones back then to guide them along their way in the deep night. They even had to go and search a few stables out to even find the right one where Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus were.

Our Gospel Reading tells us that when they finally arrived, and located them that they were simply amazed. Furthermore, they did not keep this awesome news and gift to themselves! In verse 20 we read that “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” (1) Let me give you the Same Story, but with the Second Verse(ion) here so we really can hear what happened after the shepherds’ experience. “The shepherds did not quietly leave and go back to their flocks, after they found Jesus. They shared what they had seen and heard with Mary and Joseph and I expect with everyone that they came into contact with that night.” (2) “The shepherd’s message was simple. They told others what they had seen and heard. They related their experience with the angel and the hosts of heaven, and relayed what the angel had told them. They didn’t attempt to draw any great theological truths from what they experienced.” (2)

To give even more context to our story here we actually come to realize that the angels did not impart this all too important news on the high officials like Emperor Augustus or Governor Quirinius. They were not worrying or ensuring all their government records and books were straight. They knew the big book and story were going to be straight for all eternity. Furthermore, the angels were not concerned with so-called human positions or status. They came to the fields to the workers, and they shared the good news with what might have been considered the lowliest of lowliest back in that day. It is here that we get to see there is no special reservations, there is no special outfit, there is no special status or name tag or title that you have to have. You just have to be you. The shepherds were the ones that got to experience this miraculous birth and presence of the Christ Child! Just like you and I got that very chance last evening, and we get that chance yet again here today, and if you really think about it we get that chance every single year on Christmas!

“If the shepherds hadn’t gone to the manger, they would have missed a wonderful opportunity to actually see with their physical eyes and maybe even hold with their physical arms the future of the world. They made the effort. They went. They were blessed. God blesses us also as we go where He tells us to go to reaffirm His promises - when we go to His Word and His sacrament every day and every week and every year. These physical things are not far for us. They are only a few minutes’ drive. They are not out in the cold. They are in a heated building. They are on our desks, in our bookshelves, and here - at church. This is where God has told us to find them - in simple places and easy to access places - perfect places - just like the manger. Simply come.” (3)

What a command, or directive we get! Two words that carry such weight and such experience. Simply Come! There is no confusion in the midst of any chaos. There is no issue in the realm of communication. The command, the directive is so simple. We just need to be like the shepherds and have a little trust, and for that fact a little faith. We need to be like the shepherds and not just hear a message, but take action. We often hear seeing is believing. The shepherds’ experiences changed their lives, and the lives of several people in almost an instant. So, why not be totally trusting? We can throw some caution to the wind, and go like the shepherds did with haste!

Let us also be reminded that “God’s announcements are invitations for us to draw near to God and to experience him more fully in our lives. Christianity is an experiential faith. Certainly, doctrine and dogma can be taught and followers of Jesus can state that we believe in these truths. But there is more to faith than that. Faith is experiencing God’s love and walking in its reality every day of our lives.” (2) “Our calling as disciples of Jesus is similar to the shepherds. We are given the privilege of sharing how God has moved in our lives, and the difference God’s presence in our lives has made. We are able to share the good news of our savior’s birth—his birth for the entire world.” (2)

Amen.

**References**

(1) SundaysandSeasons.com

Sunday, December 25, 2022

Nativity of Our Lord II: Christmas Day, Year A

(2) While The World Slept (Series)

Contributed by Kevin Ruffcorn on Jan 10, 2012

Scripture: Luke 2:15-31

Denomination: Lutheran

(3) The Manger Is The Perfect Place For The Messiah To Be Found (Series)

Contributed by Joel Pankow on Nov 29, 2005

Scripture: Luke 2:12

Denomination: Lutheran

**Luke 2:[1-7] 8-20**

The world’s deep night is shattered by the light of God’s new day. The glory of God is revealed to poor shepherds, who share the good news with others.

[1In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own towns to be registered. 4Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.]

 8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

 14“Glory to God in the highest heaven,

  and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

 15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.