

Jacob Hanson
12-16-2018

Sermon Title: "God's Revelation to the Shepherds"

Prelude

UMH #245 "The First Noel"

UMH #240 "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

Advent Reading: Luke 2:1-16 (God's Revelation to the Shepherds) (On Screen/Insert)

Sharing of Blessings and Concerns

Prayer of Confession: UMH #891

Children's Message: What is a Shepherd?

Apostle's Creed UMH #881

Lord's Prayer UMH #896

Luke 2:14-20

Psalm 23

Sermon: "God's Revelation to the Shepherds"

Sermon Hymn: UMH #230 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Doxology: "Glory Be to the Father" UMH #71

UMH # 251 "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

Sending Prayer

Benediction

Announcements/Dismissal

Postlude

Questions:

- 1) What is a shepherd and what did they actually do?
- 2) Jesus is often talked about as being not only the Lamb, but also being the shepherd. What significance is there in this?
- 3) Shepherds take care of sheep, which are about the most helpless and fragile animal imaginable. It takes some humility to know we cannot do anything on our own, without the guidance of our shepherd. Do you let the Lord lead you, or are you trying to be your own master?

Memory Verse: Luke 2:11 “For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Pastor Jacob Hanson

“God’s Revelation to the Shepherds”

12/16/2018

Opening Prayer

Welcome to Kasson/Pleasant Corners UMC, my name is Jacob Hanson and I am blessed to be the minister here in this wonderful church. If you have not been here previously, or maybe haven’t been around in a while, a special welcome to you! I hope you will stick around for a little while after service and get to know a few of us. We are right now in the thick of the Advent Season, which is an incredibly joyful time of year for everyone... but especially for us Christians! Advent, basically the Greek word for “coming,” is a time where we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus to us in human flesh. The reason for the celebration though does not end at the manger, as wonderful as it is. No, it is very important that we remember that this season only matters because Christ will go to the cross for our sins on Good Friday and raise Himself from the dead on Easter Sunday. Don’t forget that as you enjoy this wonderful time of year. Over the past few weeks we have been looking at the birth story of Jesus. We have talked about how prophecy had set the stage for His coming, and we also have looked at Joseph’s dreams surrounding Jesus’s birth. Today we will talk about the shepherds whom God revealed Christ’s birth to first, and how you are very much like those shepherds that first heard the message. We will also talk about how we are in need of a shepherd, because we are an awful lot like the sheep they lead. But before we get to that ending piece, we have to first go over how you, as average folks, are a lot like those shepherds.

First of all, how are you like these poor shepherds that are out tending their sheep in the fields 2000 years ago? We have heard countless Christmas songs about these folks over the years detailing how they were tending their sheep, how they were out in the cold winter’s night, and how they came to greet the Messiah. All that is good, but what relationship do you as the average person here and now have to these people? Well, frankly the shepherds were your common people. It is amazing to think about how out of all of the people that God could have sent angels to first to announce the arrival of Jesus, that He chose these guys. Shepherds were mostly dirty, poor, and of average status. These weren’t the highlight of society, they weren’t the best and brightest scriptural students, they were your average hardworking blue collared folks. To these men (they were almost certainly all men) the first announcement is made outside of Jesus’s immediate family. What does that say about your Creator? What does that say about your Lord? It says that He cares about the common man, that the Savior wasn’t sent just to save the religious elite, (pastors, priests, pharisees, and the like) but that Christ was sent to save all of us. After all, just look at verse 10 which was read: “But the angel said to them, ‘Do

not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” In case you are wondering, you too are part of that phrase “all the people.”

Have you ever felt like the Lord couldn't or wouldn't save you? Like you weren't worth His time or He didn't care about you because you weren't special? This scripture, along with many peoples' experiences, points to the opposite of that being true. Mechanics, farmers, teachers, daycare workers, nurses, and even people from Wisconsin like me are all called into the kingdom by the Lord. Don't let the world or the enemy tell you that you are not special to your Creator, because the reality is that you are! If Jesus was to be born today in Bethlehem maybe the angels would have appeared to some mechanics in a shop in Israel instead, and maybe the disciples instead of being mostly fishermen would have been construction workers. You and those shepherds have much in common... you may be your “average” person, but you are no less special to the Lord, and He came to save YOU just as He came to save everyone else. Praise the Lord He came to save common folks like you and me!

So the shepherds in this story have something in common with us in that they were common people, given a great gift. But we also have something in common with the actual sheep that these guys were tending. Jesus is often known as the Lamb, but He is also commonly mentioned as being our shepherd as well. You should know that throughout Israel's history that God talks about leading His people in the way a shepherd leads their sheep. Notable people were shepherds such as King David and the prophet Amos. (Don't worry if you haven't heard of that guy yet... we will get to him!) Jesus Himself will talk at length about how He has come to lead His people like a shepherd leads sheep. Many of the parable will deal with shepherds and sheep, and there are two reasons for that. One is that the people of day could identify with shepherds and sheep really well because it was all around them. It is the same as why your humble pastor will mention football or farming on a regular basis... because we as modern Americans generally have an idea about that stuff. The second reason that Christ consistently mentions sheep and shepherds is because we are an awful lot like sheep!

Sheep, as you may or may not know, are some of the most fragile animals in existence. They get cold easily, are easily frightened, and generally are defenseless against any real predator. In Israel they would have encountered lions and bears and wolves, which all would have their way with a domesticated flock unless they were protected. Even in our part of the world today, a coyote pack will decimate a sheep herd unless it is protected. In addition to being rather defenseless, your average sheep needs guidance in order to make it through. They have this habit of wandering off, getting lost, getting into trouble, etc. Sheep are prone to being in danger and trouble, and they really need leadership to do well. As a domestic animal, though they are much trouble, they have a lot of value. If they are kept safe and don't wander off, their meat is good, their milk is good, and they produce a great amount of wool which is wonderful. Sheep, although fragile, are very valuable and important. This is where our second reading, a very well known one, from Psalm 23 comes into play.

“The Lord is my shepherd.” The beginning of Psalm 23 sets the stage for the rest of Psalm. Many of us have likely heard this Psalm before. We have read it at funerals, at services, and in recited it in times of need... but note what this Psalm is really saying and how it connects you and the Lord. It is saying that the Lord above is my guidance, my protector, my leader. Just as a sheep needs a shepherd to watch over them, we too need our Creator to watch over us. We are really good at getting lost and into trouble. We are very vulnerable on our own to attacks by the enemy. But with the shepherd watching over us, we do not need to be afraid. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.” “I fear no evil, for You (meaning the Lord) are with me.” These words should give you comfort knowing that you are under the charge of the One who loves you. You are valuable to your Creator, and He had good plans for you. He doesn’t want to see you harmed, but rather desires to take care of you as a good shepherd takes care of their sheep. Here during the Advent season we celebrate the glory that is the coming of the One who protects us and guides us. We celebrate that our shepherd is coming soon, to guide us home. Yet, the truth is that while we will often talk about how Jesus is our shepherd and we are His sheep, while we will acknowledge that Christ came to save all men, yet we struggle to actively embrace those truths.

In 2018 we often like to think that we don’t need any help. Speaking as a man, I know for a fact that I have acted this way many times, as likely many of you have. Oftentimes we are not willing to ask for help even when we need it the most. Whether it be financially, physically, or whatever, we as Americans don’t like to ask for help. But we definitely need it... especially in relationship to our Creator and King. How many folks do you know that never pray, never seek out the Lord, and don’t have much to do with Him until something terrible happens? I know plenty, as do you likely. It’s pride that keeps us from asking for help from the Lord. I know a guy, a great guy who loves the Lord, who struggled mightily with this a few years back. He didn’t want to seem like a deadbeat or like someone who was not able to make ends meet, so he didn’t actually tell any of us that he was homeless for a while. He was working two jobs and sleeping in his car or on the couch at one of his employers. He would arrive early to a job where he worked in the kitchen to give himself a “shower” in the dish sink. All this time he had a million different friends in town that would have been happy to lend him their couch and a few bucks. I know we would have if we had known. As Christians, we do the same thing so often... we don’t ask for help when we need it, we don’t allow our shepherd to lead us beside still waters. Don’t be prideful, know that you do need the Lord, you cannot handle everything on your own.

As we go throughout the remainder of the Advent season, it is important for us to keep in mind that Christ came to save us regular folks. It is also important for us to remember that we, much like sheep, need our shepherd to watch over us. We cannot do this life on our own. The last thing I would like to touch on for us out of our scripture for today is the humbleness of our Creator in coming to us in such a manner.

We have looked at this before, but it a great time for a reminder that our Lord came as a human babe. He, the almighty all-powerful Creator, came as a lowly human being so that we might be able to have a full relationship with Him. It is easy to forget amidst Christmas ham and the Christmas Story, but it is extremely important. That is how much your Lord loves you.

So as you leave here today, remember that the Lord came to save folks like you, He loves you just as He loved those regular shepherds out in the hills. Remember that like sheep, we need a guiding protector, don't think you can go it alone. Finally, remember during this season that the reason we celebrate at all is because Christ came to take our sins as a human being. Many blessings on your day, Merry Christmas. Lets close in prayer.

Closing Prayer

Advent Reading: Isaiah 9:2-3a, 6-7 (The King is Coming)

“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in Your presence.”

“Praise be to God! The time is coming where the King will join us, where His majesty will come and dwell amongst us. Through Him our sins will be forgiven, by His stripes we are healed.”

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”

“Praise be to God! The King is coming, may we be prepared in our hearts for His arrival. For He will be the one who will take our sins and make us right with God.”

Advent Reading: Matthew 1:18-21, 22-23 (Joseph’s Dream)

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’”

“Praise the Lord, the Messiah has come! Shown to be true by the miracle of the virgin birth, we honor our Lord Jesus, the one who takes away the sins of the world.”

“Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with Child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, ‘God with us.’”

“Praise the Lord! Christ Jesus, Immanuel, has come to dwell amongst us as was prophesied long ago, may we heed His call.”

Advent Reading: Luke 2:1-7, 8-12, 13-16 (God’s Revelation to the Shepherds) (What Child is This UMH #219, It Came upon the Midnight Clear UMH #218, O Little Town of Bethlehem UMH #230,

“Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up to Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

“O little town of Bethlehem, blessed are you among cities of men, for in you is born the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. What a humble birthplace for the Savior of mankind, wrapped in swaddling clothes next to common livestock in a manger.”

“In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’”

“The Lord be praised for His love of all people! The announcement of His Son’s birth could have been made to kings and queens, rulers and religious leaders... but it was instead made to the common men, shepherds tending their flocks. A shepherd is whom first heard of Christ’s birth, a fitting announcement since Christ would be the shepherd for all of God’s people.”

“And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.’ 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.' So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger."

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men! May His name be praised."

Advent Reading: Matthew 2:1-4, 5-9, 10-12 (The Visit of the Magi) (UMH 245, The First Noel; UMH 254, We Three Kings;

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born of King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born."

"Praise be to God that Christ has arrived among men. While Herod designed for the Messiah to be put to death, God protected His Son, ensuring that Immanuel would not be harmed before His time."

"They said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: And you, Bethlehem of Judea; land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.' Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.' After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was."

"Praise be to God, that those who are faithful and alert will see the Messiah, Christ Jesus."

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way."

"Praise be to God, Christ is here. He will come to take away the sins of the world, to redeem His people. He will give sight to the blind, free the prisoners, and release us from our sins."

Christmas Eve

UMH #238 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

UMH #239 “Silent Night, Holy Night”

UMH #346 “Joy to the World”

The Parable of the Sower of Seed

Get to Know You Game: Describe Yourself

You will talk to three different people who you likely did not know before very well, and will ask them different questions. If you can repeat the answers to all three folks when randomly called on, then you can win a prize. Also have to do something random with said person.

-Find someone who goes to a different school (high school/mid school counts). If you had to describe yourself in three words what would they be and why? Make up a handshake with person.

-Find someone who likes totally different music than you. Why do you like the music you do, and who is your favorite artist? Make up a great rapper sound. (Burr! Gah Gah Gah! Etc.)

-Find someone you haven't really talked to before. Find something that you two have in common. This is your partner for the Bible lesson, sit next to them... you will be discussing some of these questions for the topic with them.

Pre-Questions:

-What is a sower? (Old time farmer who spreads seed.)

-What is a parable? (Anecdotal story used for teaching... understandable by those who actually want to hear, but impossible for those outside to understand.)

After Reading:

-Seed by the Road

-What happens to this seed? (It is taken immediately by Satan)

-Do you think that we have any say in if the word gets taken from us? (We do, must stay alert and away from the dangers of the enemy)

-Where do we have the word stolen from us? (Before church, before good things are set to happen, when we don't choose the Lord over all else)

-Seed in Shallow Soil

-What happens to this seed? (Withers under the sun)

-How is this seed supposed to strengthen itself? Can it? (Grow deep roots, don't stay at that shallow level so that it might survive trials and temptations)

-Seed in Thorns

-What happens to this seed? (It is choked out by the garbage of this world)

-How does this seed find itself in this situation? How does it get out of it? (It doesn't care for the more important things. Can escape by setting its sights on higher things)

-Seed in Good Soil

-What happens to this seed? (Grows and Reproduces)

-If this is the Christian life and ideal, what should be happening as a part of our faith? (Growth in us and spreading the word!)

Game:

-Since our scripture topic had to do with spreading deceit and/or goodness and stuff, we are going to be playing mafia...