

December 8, 2019

Why We Need the Shepherds in Christmas
Free Grace Presbyterian Church

SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

'Today' connects to the yesterday of God's promises and Old Testament prophecies, which are now being fulfilled.

David Garland
Biblical scholar and
President of Baylor University

"For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness... I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice... And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken."

**Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-16,
23-24**

He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.

Psalms 78:70-72

The manger scene captures something that is true of life in a fallen world. Joy mingles with hardship. Promise mingles with messiness. But in Bethlehem, Jesus entered right in. He fulfilled the promise, and he provided the joy, in the middle of a scene that would otherwise have been sad and unremarkable.

Daniel Clifford
Presbyterian pastor

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for Thee?
My soul's a shepherd too; a flock it feeds
Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.
The pasture is Thy words; the streams, Thy grace
Enriching all the place.
Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Outsing the daylight hours.
Then we will chide the sun for letting night
Take up his place and right:
We sing one common Lord; wherefore He should
Himself the candle hold.

George Herbert
"Christmas"

17th century Welsh poet and Anglican priest

GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Isaiah 9

People: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

Leader: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

John 1

People: and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We sing glory to God for the child that was given

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

1. An - gels we have heard on high, sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,
2. Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?
3. Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;

and the moun - tains in re - ply ech - o back their joy - ous strains.
Say what may the tid - ings be, which in - spire your heav'n - ly song?
come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.

REFRAIN
Glo - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o,

glo - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o.

*Gloria in excelsis
Deo*
Glory to God in
the highest

Jesus Christ is the radiance of the glory of God (Hebrews 1). Thus he not only reveals God's glory to us, he calls us to participate in that glory by giving to God the glory he is due—our worship, our lives, and everything.

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

And suddenly
there was with the
angel a multitude
of the heavenly
host praising God
and saying,
"Glory to God in
the highest, and
on earth peace
among those with
whom he is
pleased!"

Luke 2

1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;
2. Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord!
3. Hail the heav'n - born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righ - teous - ness!

peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"
Late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of the Vir - gin's womb.
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with heal - ing in his wings.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, join the tri - umph of the skies;
Veiled in flesh the God - head see; hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty,
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that man no more may die,

with th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
pleased as man with men to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el.
born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them sec - ond birth.

¹ REFRAIN
Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King."

GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

God announces our waywardness, that our sin leads us astray from him

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way...

Isaiah 53

We acknowledge our waywardness, our sin

O God, in the beginning you spoke,
and creation was born,
the object of your loving care.
In the fullness of time you spoke,
and the Word became flesh, Jesus,
your love veiled in flesh.
We wonder at the miracle of creation;
we stand in awe before the mystery of the incarnation.

Lord, forgive us earthbound creatures,
feeble in faith, empty of hope, and lacking in love.
Forgive us for we have not kept watch for your coming.
We have occupied ourselves with our own concerns.
We have not waited to find your will for us.
We have not noticed the needs of the people around us.
We have not acknowledged the love that has been shown to us.
Forgive us, God, as we get distracted by the busyness of the season.

Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds,
the intelligent courage of the wise men,
and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph,
that we may journey with them to Bethlehem
and find the good news of a child born for us,
who is Christ the Lord. Amen

As we confess our sins to him God shows the depth of his love for us by reminding us of his answer for our sin—Jesus Christ. His coming to us—his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection—are the ultimate display of love.

God declares that Jesus took on himself our sin to return us to our Shepherd

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd... All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ... He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Matthew 9
Isaiah 53
1 Peter 2

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2

We rest in the joy of our Savior, who took our sin

“God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen”

1. God rest you mer - ry, gen - tle - men, let noth - ing you dis - may,
2. From God our heav'n - ly Fa - ther, a bless - ed an - gel came;
3. “Fear not, then,” said the an - gel, “let noth - ing you af - fright;
4. The shep - herds at those tid - ings re - joic - ed much in mind,

re - mem - ber Christ our Sav - ior was born on Christ - mas day,
and un - to cer - tain shep - herds brought tid - ings of the same:
this day is born a Sav - ior of a pure vir - gin bright,
and left their flocks a - feed - ing, in tem - pest, storm, and wind:

to save us all from Sa - tan's pow'r when we were gone a - stray;
how that in Beth - le - hem was born the Son of God by name.
to free all those who trust in him from Sa - tan's pow'r and might.”
and went to Beth - le - hem straight - way, the Son of God to find.

REFRAIN
O tid - ings of com - fort and joy, com - fort and joy,

O tid - ings of com - fort and joy.

GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

Luke 2:8-20

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When 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." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Sermon

Mr. Robert Crosby

Why We Need the Shepherds in Christmas

The Little People of Christmas

In Scripture we not only hear the Word of God, we also find the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ. So we fill our worship and our lives with his Word that we would constantly be drawn to God through Jesus Christ.

We rejoice in the peace God declares at Christmas: his presence with us

"I am the Lord"



1. When you pass through the wa-ters I will be with you and the waves will
 2. When you walk through the fire you'll not be burned, and the flames will



not o - ver - come you Do not fear, for I have re - deemed you. I have
 not con - sume you Do not fear, for I have re - deemed you. I have



Women: I am the Lord, your
 called you by name, you are mine. *Men:* For I am the Lord, your God;
 called you by name, you are mine.



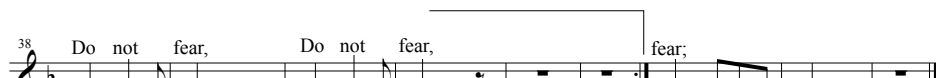
Men: I am the Lord your God; *Unison:* I am the Ho - ly One of Is - ra - el, your Sa - vior. *Men:* For



Women: I am the Lord, your God;
 I am the Lord, your God; *Men:* I am the Lord, your God; *Unison:* I am the Ho - ly One of



Women: Do not fear, Do not fear,
 Is - ra - el, your Sa - vior. *Men:* I am the Lord, I am the Lord, I am the



Do not fear, Do not fear, fear;
 Lord, I am the Lord, *Unison:* I am the Lord.

"I will make with them a covenant of peace and... they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord GOD. And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD."

Ezekiel 34

GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

Through the celebration of the Lord's Supper God seeks us out and unites us to the Good Shepherd who gave his life for us, Jesus Christ

We celebrate God's free grace to us in Jesus Christ by observing the Lord's Supper each Sunday. We invite to the Lord's Table all those who are baptized followers of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and his body, the Church. By eating the bread and drinking the cup with us as a visitor, you are acknowledging to our church that you are in covenant with God. You also acknowledge that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. If you have any doubts about your participation, please speak to one of the elders after the service. Wine and bread are the elements of the supper as instituted by Jesus Christ and so we follow his example.

Jesus' birth that we celebrate at Christmas was for one purpose: to redeem people for God through his death on the cross.

In the Lord's Supper we partake of the benefits of his death, the great redemptive act of history. It assures the believer that he was personally the object of that incomparable love.

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

1. Come thou long - ex - pec - ted Je - sus, Born to set thy peo - ple free
 2. Joy to those who long to see thee, Day - spring from on high, ap - pear;
 3. Come to earth to taste our sad - ness, he whose glo - ries knew no end;
 4. Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king;

5 From our fears and sins re - lease us, Let us find our rest in thee
 Come, thou prom - ised he Rod of our glad - ness, thy birth we long to hear
 By his life he brings us for - ev - er, thy Re - deem - er, Shep - herd, friend.
 Born to reign in us for - ev - er, thy king - dom bring.

9 Is - rael's Strength and Con - so - la - tion, Hope of all the earth Thou art,
 O'er the hills the an - gels sing - ing, glad ti - dings of a birth;
 Leav - ing rich - es with - out num - ber, born with - in a cat - tle stall;
 By thine own e - ter - nal Spi - rit rule in all our hearts in all our hearts
 D A D A D D/F# G A D A D

13 Dear De - sire of ev - ery na - tion, Joy of ev - ery long - ing heart,
 "Go to him, your prais - es bring - ing, Christ the Lord - has come to earth."
 This the ev - er - last - ing won - der, Christ was born the Lord of all
 By thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it, raise us to thy glor - ious throne.

Like the shepherds, we see what the angels proclaim and respond with great joy giving our tithes and offerings to God

We give our offerings to God as a public demonstration of our faith, putting our money where our mouths are. In this action we show what we claim, that our lives are organized around God and lived for him instead of ourselves.

We pray, coming like the shepherds to see the reality of what the angels proclaimed, not just in a manger in Bethlehem, but in our world and our lives

During this time we live in faith, trusting in the power of his grace, placing our lives and our church in his hands.

We ask that he would work in us and through us for his glory.

I ended my first
book with the
words No answer. I
know now, Lord,
why you utter no
answer. You are
yourself the
answer. Before
your face
questions die
away.
C.S. Lewis

GOD SENDS US WITH HIS GRACE

Like the shepherds we tell of what has been made known to us

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

Unison

(Ref.) Go, tell it on the moun - tain, o - ver the hills and ev - ery - where;

go, tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born.

1. While shep-herds kept their watch - ing o'er si - lent flocks by night, be -
2. The shep-herds feared and trem - bled when, lo! a - bove the earth rang
3. Down in a low - ly man - ger our hum - ble Christ was born, and

hold, through - out the heav - ens there shone a ho - ly light.
out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ - mas morn.

And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

Luke 2

Hebrews 13

We go in the blessing of the covenant of peace through our great shepherd

Leader: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

People: Amen

Please stay and join us for a time of refreshment and enjoying each other's company.

*This is a time to share in life together as the gospel calls us
as we reconnect with those we know and as we meet someone new.*

Just as we begin
with God's
gracious invitation,
so we end with
God's gracious
blessing to his
people.



Welcome to Free Grace

We are a broken church full of broken people. We know we need God's free grace. Some of us have accepted this grace, some are exploring what it's all about. All of us are still trying to understand it. We are a church that seeks to proclaim this free grace of God with both our words and our lives. Not satisfied with simply talking about it, we want to live it out. We invite you to come, explore, and live God's free grace with us.

Our Connections



Free Grace is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a family of churches that seeks to be faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Our Leadership

Free Grace is lead by her elders, men called by God and set apart by the church to care and lead her as individual members, families, and as a whole. Our elders are:

Rev. Per Almquist (pastor)
Brian Cosgrove
Paul Martin
Ken Morris
Ben Van Dyke



Credits

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Sarah Clarke, *voice*; Dan Crawford, *voice*; Joanne Crosby, *flute*; Millie Kate Barnard, *piano*

"Angels We Have Heard on High" Public Domain, Words: Traditional French carol. Music: Traditional French melody, arr. by Edward S. Barnes, 1937.

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" Public Domain. Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, 1753, alt. Music: Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, 1840; arr. by William H. Cummings, 1856.

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"Go, Tell It on the Mountain" Pubic Domain. Words and Music: Traditional spiritual.

"Always winter and never Christmas;
think of that." said Tumnus.

"How awful!" said Lucy.

C.S. Lewis
The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

broken people
bound together in Christ
for God's glory