

There is one word that best describes the night the Lord Jesus was born – *ordinary*. The sky was ordinary. . The stars were like diamonds sparkling on black velvet, clouds floated in front of the moon. It was a beautiful night, but not an unusual one. No reason to expect a surprise. Nothing to keep you awake. An ordinary night with an ordinary sky. The sheep were ordinary too. Common animals. No fleece made of gold. . No blue-ribbon winners. They were simply sheep – sleeping silhouettes on a hillside.

And the shepherds? Peasants they were. Ancestors of today's Bedouin. Wearing all the clothes they owned. Smelling like sheep and looking just as woolly. True- they were conscientious, and hardy as well, to spend every night outside guarding their flocks. But you won't find their staves in a museum. You won't find their writings in a library. No one asked for their opinion on social justice or the meaning of the Torah. They were anonymous, simple, ordinary people.

An ordinary night with ordinary sheep and ordinary shepherds. And were it not for the God who delights in transforming the ordinary, the night would have gone unnoticed and unrecorded. The sheep would have been forgotten, the shepherds would have slept the night away.

But God dances amidst the common. The black sky exploded with brightness . One minute, the shepherds were fast asleep, the next they were rubbing their eyes and staring into the face of an angel. *The night was ordinary no more.*

The angels came in the night because that is when light is best seen and when light is most needed.

God transforms the ordinary for the same reason.

That's also probably why the announcement came first to the shepherds.

They didn't ask God if he was sure he knew what he was doing.

Had the angel gone to the theologians, they would have first consulted their commentaries. Had he gone to the politicians, they would have looked around to see if anyone was watching. Had he gone to the influential, they would have checked their

diaries. So, he went to the shepherds. People whose testimony did not count in a law court. People who didn't have a reputation to protect, or an axe to grind.

Three simple observations we can make from this story.

Three observations about how the Lord brought glory to the ordinary, when he brought heaven to earth.

Three observations about how the Lord longs to work in and through you.

1. The Shepherds Searched for Jesus *“the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby.” (Luke 2:15-16)*

The shepherds were probably several miles away from Bethlehem in the Judean wilderness. But they obeyed. They went looking for Jesus, in the dark, leaving their flocks behind. The word ‘found’ in verse 16 means ‘found after a search’.

It must have taken some considerable time to find Mary and Joseph and the baby.

They searched until they found Jesus. They heard the Word of God and they obeyed.

They wanted to see whether what they had been told was true. It took time and effort to find Jesus, but it was worth it. In this respect, the shepherds are role models.

Let me ask you, have you searched for Jesus – personally? How desperate are you to find Him, know Him, to be with Him?

Jesus said, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3).

It is important that we search the scriptures for ourselves. The three most important questions we will ever ask are these: **1. Who is Jesus? 2. Why did Jesus come? 3. What does it mean to follow him?**

A secondhand faith based on what our parents or family believe will not be strong enough to withstand the storms of life. A secondhand faith will not save us.

We must develop deep personal convictions based on historical facts- Based on the eyewitness testimony of those who first encountered Jesus. They searched for Jesus. *We must too.*

2. The Shepherds Shared News of Jesus *“When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.” (Luke 2:17-18)*

Perhaps because they had no fixed address, like Bedouin today, shepherds could not testify in court. Ironic therefore that God chose these shepherds to be the first human witnesses to tell others that prophecy had been fulfilled, that angels had appeared and that the Messiah had been born. And they didn't need to go on an evangelism course first. Their testimony was spontaneous. The shepherds spoke from the heart and their words connected with the deepest needs of others.

When you hear exciting news, it's hard not to share it isn't it? You don't think about yourself or the words to say – you are simply consumed by the good news and you can't keep it in. When a baby is born in the family, you can't stop talking about your child or grandchild, you can't resist pulling out the photos, can you? It brings a smile to your face, a skip to your walk, and you find yourself sharing with anyone, even strangers, who will listen. The more exciting, the more amazing the news, the greater the eagerness to share.

The gospel is the greatest news on earth. If we feel reluctant or embarrassed to share it, perhaps we have not really understood what Jesus has done for us.

The more time we spend with Jesus the more infectious we become.

We are his witnesses today. These shepherds searched for Jesus. The shepherds shared news of Jesus.

3. The Shepherds Praised God because of Jesus

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” (Luke 2:20)

Worship is simply praising God for who he is and giving thanks for what he has done. That is why worship and evangelism flow from the same heart attitude.

The more we understand what God in Jesus has done for us, the more we will praise him and thank him. Perhaps that is why some of the most beautiful and memorable Christian hymns are actually Christmas Carols. .

If our hearts have been warmed in the fire of God's love, how can we not sing in spontaneous thanks and praise?

The shepherds searched for Jesus. And when they found Jesus, the shepherds praised God for Jesus and shared news of Jesus with all who would listen, "and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them".

Maybe you feel rather ordinary yourself today. Behind the festivities, maybe you secretly feel rather self conscious, insecure, unsure how *you* would respond to such a visitation from angels. *Then remember God delights in the ordinary.*

Today, a small unassuming church building marks the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem. It is the oldest church in the world. Underneath the altar is a cave, a little cavern lit by silver lamps. Crusader crosses are etched into the marble pillars, witness to countless generations of pilgrims. Unlike many of our Cathedrals, you can freely enter the building and admire this ancient church. You can even step down into the quiet cave where a star embedded in the floor denotes the place where the Saviour of the world was probably born.

But there is one condition, one requirement, one stipulation. ***You have to stoop.***

The entrance to the church is so low only a child can enter standing up.

A most profound parable. To view the place where Christ was born, we must humble ourselves. We must bow to enter his presence.

On our TV screens and in our newspapers, we see the world standing tall, the taller the more impressive, but to witness the Saviour, you have to get on your knees.

On your knees.

So... While the theologians were sleeping, While the elite were dreaming and while the successful were snoring, the meek were kneeling.

They were kneeling before the One only the meek will see.

They were kneeling before Jesus.

They were the first to worship and they were the first to share the good news.

“When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them... glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen” (Luke 2:17-18, 20)

May the Lord bless you & those you love as you share the good news of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, you entrust the news of Jesus' birth to the unlikeliest of people, including us. Help us to see the gift of Jesus' arrival, embolden us to go & tell others of the news of his birth, his death, & the triumph of his resurrection. Amen