

Lesson 12: Advent III - The Shepherds HEAR the Good News

Goal:

The children will remember

- that “advent” means the **coming** of Jesus Christ
- the Gospel of Luke Chapter 1, tells of Gabriel’s visit to Mary
- that the Advent season is all about celebrating and rejoicing in the **coming** of the Jesus Christ, our Hope, who brings forgiveness and righteousness

The children will learn about the “glad tidings of great joy”, the gospel or good news, of Christ’s birth.

- *What was announced:* “glad tidings of great joy” – it is the Gospel (good news, glad tidings)
- *Who announced the Good tidings of great joy:* in Luke 2 we learn that God sent an Angel, a awesome and glorious messenger of the Lord, to announce His Son’s birth to the shepherds, and host (army) of angels to sing his praise –

Who heard the Good Tidings of Great Joy: Gospel is announced to shepherds who lived near Bethlehem – same city where David was a shepherd, and saved his flock from lion and bear, before he went on to be the shepherd of God’s people Israel, and to save them from their enemies – they also knew the promise of God that he would send his people a new Savior, who would be the son and heir of David’s kingdom, called the Christ

- *What the Good Tidings of Great Joy were :* that “unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord”
- *What the Good Tidings of Great Joy meant:* Because they were shepherds of Bethlehem, they understood the message of the Gospel–Jesus was the new Hero and Champion of God’s people,

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come to save them from their enemies – and we know that their enemies are not Goliath, but sin and death that separate us from God

- *What is surprising about the Gospel:* Jesus birth was humble and is announced to shepherds who were lowly men – God chooses the lowly (humble) to hear his word and receive his Gospel
- God's coming in humility is a judgment on our pride and our confidence in worldly wisdom and power – in fact God does not need these things to accomplish his will, and our trust in them in fact gets in the way of his will being done

- *What the response to the Good Tidings of Great Joy was: Great Joy:* His coming was celebrated by armies of angels singing God's praise (the first Christmas carol), and the news of his birth is "good tidings of great joy to all people" – so Christmas is a time to rejoice and to sing God's praise!

Supplies: A Christmas gift box tied with ribbon with the following inside:

- a. a crook (you can make one out of brown air dry modeling clay)
- b. a sheep (that looks like a real sheep, not comical)
- c. a manger (perhaps from a nativity, rustic **and realistic**, not gilded or gold)
- d. straw or hay

Resource: JSB pgs. 184 - 189

Today's Scripture:

The Shepherds Hear the Good News

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2: 10, 11 **Instruction (10 min)**

SHEPHERDS – WHO RECEIVED THE GOOD TIDINGS

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(The teacher should have the gift box ready with items inside.) This is such a wonderful time of the year! One of my favorite parts is getting gifts and opening them. There are usually such wonderful things inside. I love tearing through the brightly colored paper and pulling off the ribbons.

(Hold up gift box) Do you like my gift? Isn't it pretty? We often have to wait until Christmas day to see what is inside but I don't think I can wait. I am really curious. Let's see what is inside.

(Untie ribbon and take lid off of box.) This is interesting.

(Take out the shepherd's crook) What do you think this is? Yes, a shepherd's crook. It was used by shepherds to tend sheep back in the day when Jesus was born. Raising sheep was a very common part of life back then. They didn't have grocery stores or restaurants. People raised food nearby. Shepherds had a herd of sheep that they actually lived with and raised for food and for making sacrifices in the temple in nearby Jerusalem. They would sleep out in the fields with the sheep to be sure that the sheep stayed together and so they could protect the sheep from wild animals or robbers. They used a crook like this to pull the sheep to them, to guide them where they needed to go or to hit anything that threatened them.

One of the most famous shepherds of Bethlehem lived many centuries before Jesus was born. He looked after his father's flock, he saved and delivered it from lion and bear, and he went on to be the shepherd of all God's people, and saving them from their enemies. Do anyone know what his name was? *(If no guess, give hint – he battled the giant Goliath).*
Answer: David – the shepherd-king of Israel, who saved them from Goliath and the Philistines, and ruled them on God's behalf.

God's people remembered David, and they remembered God's promise that one day he would send them a new and greater David, the heir of David's kingdom, who would save them from their sins – a new and greater David to be their Shepherd and King forever, to lead them from sin and death into the peace and life of God's kingdom. They did not know what this new Shepherd's name would be, but they called him the Christ, which means the One Anointed by God to be their King and Savior.

Through the long dark centuries they waited for Christ to come, and that is

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where we find the shepherds on Christmas night - through the long dark night keeping watching over their flocks - watching out for lion and bear and robber – and waiting for the Savior to come.

ANGELS – WHO ANNOUNCED THE GOOD TIDINGS

One minute it was quiet and dark. They were lying on the ground looking up at the stars in the black sky. The only sounds they hear were sheep bleating or the rustle of grass. But then... *(read with excitement)*

“An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them...”

(get excited) Can you imagine????!! It's quiet, it's peaceful and dark and suddenly the sky is filled with bright light caused by the glory of the Lord Himself and an angel is standing right before them.! How would you feel? *(Let the children respond)* Yes! The bible says they were filled with great fear! They were terrified!

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY – WHAT THE ANGEL ANNOUNCED

The first thing the angel does is to calm their fears.

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you **good tidings of great joy**, which shall be to all people.”

The angel was powerful and awesome, coming in a blaze of light, clothed in the awesome power of God... but he was not there to hurt them. He was a messenger from God, bringing “good tidings” – that means good news, the good news of the Gospel. He calmed them down with this good news. Remember last week when the angel came to Mary?

What was his name? *(Gabriel)*

What did he have to tell her right away? *(Not to be afraid...”And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary...)*

What was the good news for Mary? *(She was going to have Jesus “...for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy*

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womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. Luke 1:30,31)

So this angel that came to the lowly shepherds was just as awesome and fearsome. And he told the shepherds not to fear and that he came bearing good news from God. What was the good news?

**UNTO YOU IS BORN ... A SAVIOUR, CHRIST THE LORD –
WHAT THE GOOD TIDINGS WAS**

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

Remember the promise of God, to send his people a new and greater David, the heir of David's kingdom, a Shepherd to save his people from their enemies? What did they call this new and greater Son of David? “*Christ*”. So the Angel is telling them – the one you have been waiting for all through this long dark night, all through these long dark centuries – he is come! He is here! God's Salvation is here! The Shepherd of God's people is here, to save them from their sins forever! To lead them out of the darkness of death into the everlasting peace and life of God's kingdom!

Is that good news? You better believe it!

THE SURPRISING GOSPEL

But where is Christ to be found? And how does he come to his people? He comes in a very surprising way. Let's look inside my gift box and see if there is a clue. (pull out the manger)

What is this? (*let them answer*) What is a manger? A manger is where farmers put the feed for cows to eat. They usually fill it with straw or hay. (*Pull straw from the gift box. Pass it around*) And here is another clue. (*Pull out the strips of cloth and pass them around*) These are swaddling clothes, that poor people used to wrap up their children so they would be warm.

So the good news involved a manger, straw and strips of cloth. Let's read Luke 2, verses 10-12 and find out where they would find Christ ...(*Hold up*

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the Bible and read the verses so they understand that this is from Scripture)

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

Is this not surprising? The long awaited One who was the Son of God Himself, who would be born perfect so He could be sacrificed to save them from their sins, the One about Whom all the sacrificing and killing of lambs on the altar was all about, the One who was God Himself, the maker and Creator of the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords...He had been born! But...in MANGER? In a BARN? Lying on STRAW? Wrapped in SWADDLING CLOTHES?

Wouldn't you think that the King of Kings, the maker of the Universe would have come to the earth with pomp and circumstance. That he would have been in the best room, with the best doctors and nurses, that his coming would have been told to the really important people first, like the religious leaders or the earthly kings. You would think he would be clothed in robes of majesty, soft beautiful golden cloths that smelled sweet. That he would have a beautiful crib in which to lay. And you would think that the good news of his coming would have been sent to the rich and powerful first.

But no. Jesus came to this earth in a very humble way – wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, and announced to lowly shepherds first - and God did it on purpose. He could have come with all the riches of a king, to impress all the people who are thought to be “important” in the world. Easily.

Instead the good news was given first to the lowly shepherds who were told where they could find Jesus. Much to their surprise, they heard that they would find him in a lowly stable. A stinky, dirty stable where animals are kept. That he would be lying in a manger, on straw. Prickly straw that cows eat. That he would be wrapped in strips of cloth, humble strips of cloth.

But God did not want us to put our trust in riches or power or wisdom or

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fame or popularity or our ability to speak or any other human ability or accomplishment. He wanted us to put our trust in *him*, and *his* power, and *his* wisdom, and *his* goodness, and so he sent his Son into the world in a way that showed that these things do not matter. All that matters is that God is come – and the gift of God alone is enough – even if this gift comes wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!

God comes to us in lowliness and humility – and if we would know him, find him, receive him, we must be lowly and humble ourselves – humbly ready to hear God's word, humbly ready to believe God's word, humbly ready to obey God's word, and humbly ready to look for God where his word teaches us to find him.

This Advent season as we celebrate the coming of Christ, let's try

- like the shepherds, to wait, watch, pray and long to hear the Gospel
- to listen carefully to the Gospel, the “good tidings of great joy” which the shepherds heard from the angel, which we now hear from our priests and teachers and parents and other Christians
- to believe the good news that is told to us – that Mary's son is born for us, to be our Savior, and he is Christ the Lord, the shepherd of God's people, who saves them from their sins and brings them into the kingdom of everlasting life and peace with God.

That is what shepherds *heard* that great night!

Next week we are going to learn about what the shepherds SAW! Let's pray...

PRAYER TIME (1 min)

Dear Lord, we are so grateful that You told the shepherds the good news..the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We know from your Word that the Gospel is for all men, that you, Jesus are the Savior of all who will come to you in faith. Help us to see You as You are, powerful yet humble. Help us to be like You. In Jesus Name. AMEN

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ACTIVITY TIME (15 min)

Make a Sheep Ornament

Supplies

2 inch white and black pom poms
black and white felt for face and legs
glue
red ribbon

