# God Saves Sinners Only

Luke 2:8–14

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*Christmas*

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Sunday, December 13, 2015, 7pm at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

**livinghopechurch.net**

***Introduction***: Open your Bible to Luke 2. We are in a series entitled “God’s Calling of Broken People.”

**Christmas Dangerous Time**

The Christmas season can be a dangerous time! No, I am not referring to shopping at Wal-Mart, although you are taking your life into your hands when you go there during this time of year. I am talking about the Christmas story. There is a danger that we can hear it so often that it become too familiar. There is a danger that we will lose the significance of the message because we are too familiar with it.

**Little Town of Bethlehem Had Amazing Inhabitants**

Bethlehem is a small town six miles south of Jerusalem. It was the home town of:

* Ruth,
* Boaz,
* Jessie and
* King David.
* It is also place where Jacob buried Rachel.

Bethlehem is a town with a great Name – a place known for the mightiest and most famous of people.

So when God comes into the world, to whom does He announce His birth to? Does He send His messengers to kings and governors? That’s first where the wise men came. They came to Herod. But no, they had to go to a forgotten town.

Micah says in **Mic. 5:2**,

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
    who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
    one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
    from ancient days.”

When His Son comes into the world, does He have His angels appear to armies or generals? What about priests and kings?

No, God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. God calls the lowly. He sends His messengers to the broken, to the lowly, to the hurting. He speaks to the despised and rejected. Rarely will He call one who is strong or wise, but God calls those who are nothing.

He comes to the lowly shepherds of Bethlehem.

**Luke 2:8–12** (ESV) — “And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and **the glory of the Lord** shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, “**Fear not**, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

**Eyewitnesses of God’s Glory**

Who were they that they should be eyewitnesses of God’s glory and receive history’s greatest birth announcement? In Christ’s day, shepherds stood on the bottom rung of the Palestinian social ladder. They shared the same unenviable status as tax collectors and dung sweepers. Only Luke mentions them.

1. The **fractured** people God calls (vs. 8-9a).

**Luke 2:8–9a** (ESV) — “And in the same region there were **shepherds** out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them…”

**Shepherds Had Bad Reputation**

The Jewish Mishnah records that these guys belonged to a class of people that were considered of ill repute. They had a bad reputation. They were **uneducated** and were not accepted by the religious elite because they were ceremonially unclean by virtue of the vocation that they were in. They represent the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came. Such outcasts were the first recipients of the good news.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Shepherds were people that were **not very trusted**, in fact, they were known for their **thievery**. They stole things all the time. Because of that, these types of people would never be asked to testify in a court of law. So we are dealing with those who were unacceptable in society.

And yet it is these types of people that God chooses to bear witness to the fact that now Emmanuel is born and “God is with us”.

**Jesus Came to Call Sinners**

* Jesus says, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (**Luke 5:32**).
* **1 Peter 5:5**, “be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.”

**Examples**

* + 1. **Moses** – Moses had a speech problem. He wasn’t anything great or mighty.
    2. **The 12 apostles**, four were fisherman, when they spoke they were called “unlearned men”
    3. **Matthew Levi** was about the greatest example of how far God will go to forgive you and use you. He was a total outcast.

**The Church a Spiritual Hospital**

People say, “Well, Christians are not perfect people”. All you have to do is look in the mirror and we all know that. The church is a very, very imperfect place. Churches are filled with very imperfect people. Often people think, church is for good people, or for almost perfect people. The exact opposite is true. The church is a spiritual hospital!

**Jesus Friend of Sinners to Transform**

You cannot miss the message of Jesus’ miracles in light of Matthew and all his sinner friends around Jesus. Jesus has come to bring healing and wholeness to the broken lives of sinners. Sinners are ravaged by sin. God calls sinners to Himself, and they are born again. The seed of new life is in all of us, but there begins a process of deep spiritual change. We are all different conditions and levels in our journey to Christlikeness.

**The Outcasts**

What we are going to see is that ***the church is not a showcase for saints, but a hospital for sinners***. When you go into a hospital, people are in different stages of recovery. Some are in critical condition; some are nearly well, and there are some that are strong enough to care for others.

God calls the outcasts of society! He calls those who know they are needy.

The question is asked—how far can Christ go in forgiving sinners? So Matthew seems to think of the most extreme example of a sinner, and he ends up using himself as the example!

So listen to Jesus in **Mark 2:17a**, “When Jesus heard *it*, he said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick”. When do you go to the doctor? When you are well? When you are sleeping perfectly? No. When ? **When you are sick.** Our Lord makes a simple yet profound point. **Verse 17b**, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”.

**No Room for Spiritual Pride**

Remember whatever spiritual mountains you have climbed in your life, it is *only by the grace of God!* Remember where you came from. Like the shepherds, you were a sinner! There is never room for a spirit of spiritual pride. We must remember that we have all been rescued from hell, and we are to rescue those who have destroyed their lives with sin, and we are to show them the grace of God so that God can save them and bring on their way to Christlikeness.

1. The **fearful** people God calls (vs. 9-11).

**Luke 2:8–9** (ESV) — “And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and **the glory of the Lord** shone around them, and they were filled with great fear…”

**Glory Cloud**

What is this glory that appeared before the shepherds? It is spoken of often in the Old Testament.

**Exodus 40** tells us what this cloud was. **Exodus 40:34-35**, “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.”

**Shekinah Glory**

This is God’s Shekinah glory. This is the essence of God being revealed in splendor and glory.

This cloud was large enough that all Israel (probably 2 to 3 million Jews) could see the pillar God’s presence even from a distance. It was a breathtaking, awe inspiring sight. It was unmistakable.

The pillar of cloud and fire was the Shekinah glory of God manifesting to God’s people. Think of it as an extended Old Testament **transfiguration**. God was building their faith.

**A Healthy Fear for the Presence of God**

The glory that appeared to the Shepherds was God’s presence! This caused great fear!! Their initial response of the Shepherds was fear. That’s a good thing. We are truly sinners in the hands of an angry God without Jesus.

The shepherds are here they are in this field. And they see a bright light. **Verse 9** tells us “And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and **the glory of the Lord** shone around them, and they were filled with great fear”. Fear! And that is the natural response of any sinner when confronted with the glory of God and His holiness. To see our sin exposed, and to see Him high and lifted up in all his brilliant purity.

**ISAIAH: Before Joy there is Fear**

When a sinner comes before the great God and King of the universe, before there is joy, there is fear!

**Isaiah 6:5**, “Woe is me! For I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Before joy comes fear. Before the comfort of the Gospel comes the stark realization of who we are and what we deserve.

**No Need to Fear!**

There is no need to fear with the Savior!

Verse 10, “And the angel said to them, “**Fear not**, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

**Angels Not on a Mission of Vengeance**

But the angel reassures the shepherds though that they **don’t need to fear** anything! Why? Because these angels were **not** on a mission of vengeance as they will be at the end of the world, but these angels in were on a mission to proclaim the good news. The angel says to the shepherds, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good news of great joy…” (**verse 10**).

**365 Times: Fear Not!**

365 times in the Bible, God says to us in one way of another “Fear NOT”.

* **2 Timothy 1:7** (ESV) — “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”
* **Isaiah 26:3** (ESV) — “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”

The cause of peace is trust in Jehovah – trust in our Lord Jesus. Get your eyes off of your fears. They are little in comparison to our Great God, Jesus Christ.

**The Message: Good News of Peace!**

Here’s the **message** of good tidings that we are to give: the Redeemer has arrived! There can finally be peace between God and man, and it is all because of the goodness of God’s will toward us! As **Titus 3:5** tells us, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us…” We were God’s enemy. We were alienated against Him. But because of the “good pleasure of God’s will” (**Ephesians 1:5**), we can have **PEACE** with God!! And now because of this redemption as verse 14 says, we can give “Glory to God in the highest”. We can give glory to God in higher degrees that than God had ever received before Christ came to earth.

This is not a temporary peace that Augustus Caesar could enforce, a Pax Romana. But rather this is an eternal peace—a lasting peace!

**Romans 8:1** (ESV) — “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

1. The **favored** people God calls (vs. 12-14).

**Luke 2:12** (ESV) — “And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

**The Savior is a Vulnerable Baby**

Look how favored we are. Christ did not come as an Earthly Monarch, though he will one day rule the world. He did not come as a General. Christ humbled Himself and became like us – He came as a Baby!

**The Savior Saves the Undeserving**

On earth... peace! What?! That’s a surprise! How about on earth... war! For all we did! But no! Peace! Shepherds did nothing to **deserve** this good news! **Luke 2:13–14**, And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and **on earth peace** among those with whom he is pleased!”

The point is rather that through the birth of the Messiah God extends his favor to people who **have done nothing to deserve it**; and he graciously grants them peace. *Peace* expresses the nature of salvation as the restoration of good relations between God and sinful people and the consequent reception of his blessings. The *cloths* were the normal covering of a newly born child, and might indicate (at least to some of Luke’s readers) that it was the royal child.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The Messiah would come in a very humble way, though this in no way made Him less than God.

**The Prophecy**

Isaiah 9:6

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.

**Wow!**

Imagine the scene. Here are these humble shepherds. And they must be thinking “The Messiah is here, and we’re the first to find out about it?” This is amazing!

**What is their Reaction?**

So what is their first **reaction**? They begin to run! **Verse 15**, they said “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem…” And **verse 16** says they began to run to Bethlehem, “they came **with haste**”! Sprinting shepherds! You can imagine how they would have been out of breath as they had gathered their garments into their arm sprinting to Bethlehem, probably jumping over some of the lower fences that were in their way!

They have a meeting with God in human flesh.

And finally with gasping breath, they find “Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger” (**verse 16**). The angel had told them, that is exactly where the Messiah would be.

**Smelly Shepherds**

Now Mary and Joseph would have been surprised! I mean they had just been through a long difficult journey of 80 miles! They were fatigued, not to mention the fact that Mary had just given birth. And so here they are looking at the babe “lying in the manger”, and all the sudden out of no where come these smelly shepherds, and they’re excited! They’re saying ‘There He is! That’s the one the angel told us about!’ This is the Christ, the Messiah! The Redeemer of the world! And there was God who never sleeps or slumbers is there asleep on the hay.

**Shepherds Leaning on Their Staffs - Bowing**

The Shepherds leaning on their staffs could not have stood too long. They had tended lambs, but now they were looking at the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. And they had to bow their head and bend their knee. This was an incredible Savior for incredible sinners! So all their fears are replaced with overflowing joy!

**Conclusion**: Do you see what’s going on here? The gospel does not come to those who insist on sitting in gold gilded palaces, but unto the humble. We must all come as lowly and humble beggars to God, for “God resists the proud”, but he gives the goodness of His will to those who are “humble”!

The Gospel is always given to the poor, not the powerful, the broken, not the boasting! To the lowly, not the lofty!

So if you are here tonight and you feel you are righteous, there’s no hope for you. But if you are a sinner, and you see the vileness of your sin, then you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven! God wants to save you! Yea, He will save you if you will repent and trust in Him! Put your trust in Jesus!!

1. Stein, R. H. (2001). *Vol. 24*: *Luke* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (108). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition* (4th ed.) (Lk 2:1–20). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)