

*In Nomine Jesu*

**We Shall Go**

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Merry Christmas! The day is finally here. Emmanuel has come to be with us. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, has been born. Today is the day that we celebrate the High Feast of the Nativity. Last night we heard about His birth. We heard about how He was heralded by angels to the lowly shepherds. Today, we will hear about how those shepherds reacted to this good news of great joy. Our reading for today picks up right after our reading from last night ends.

*And it happened as the angels were going away from them into the heavens, the shepherds spoke to each other, "Let us go through now unto Bethlehem and we shall behold the sayings that has happened which the Lord made known to us."*<sup>1</sup>

How do the shepherds respond to the good news of great joy? They want to see Him. Do you remember the words of the angels from last night? Just in case, here's what the angels said,

*"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. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."*<sup>2</sup>

Did you hear any command there? Did you hear the angels tell the shepherds that they had to go and see Jesus? No, you didn't. The angels simply did their job. They told the shepherds what was going on, and then left in a blaze of glory, literally in this case.

The shepherds didn't have to go and see what was going on. They could have just shrugged their shoulders and said, "Well that was cool," then go back to watching their sheep. But their Faith wouldn't let them do that. They had heard the message. God had sent their Savior to them, and now their Faith responded. Your Faith can't help but respond to the Word. Faith which has heard the Word is driven to action. The Lord had made something known to these shepherds, and now they were going to act and were going to behold exactly what it was. Back to this morning's text:

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 2:15

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:10-12 (ESV)

*And they went hastily and they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger.<sup>3</sup>*

Notice here that the Faith doesn't move them lackadaisically. No, they went hastily. The Faith they had received through hearing the word wasn't going to let them be slow about this. This is the Savior! He's here, and they know where He is. They find Him, and His mother and stepfather. What do they do when they see the physical reality of their Salvation?

*And seeing, they made known concerning the words which had been spoken to them concerning this Child.<sup>4</sup>*

They've seen. They can literally see their Salvation lying in front of them in a manger. What do they do? They run around telling everyone the exact same thing that the angels had told them; like all the faithful who want to tell rightly about Jesus they repeat the revealed world. They made the words concerning the Child known. They wanted to make sure that everybody knew that this was the Savior. The One who had been promised had finally arrived. Notice again though, this is not something that anyone made them do. They just did it. There was no command from the angels to tell everyone. Through the shepherds' Faith, the Spirit moved them to do this deed. The same Spirit moved you to be here today. But what about those who heard the shepherd's message? How did they respond? How will people respond to what you tell them about what you see here today?

*And all the hearing ones wondered concerning the saying of the shepherds to them.<sup>5</sup>*

Now here we see a reaction that is likely much more familiar to us. The recipients of the shepherds' message wondered or marveled about the things which they had been told.

Let's picture this for a moment. Imagine that you are waiting for the Messiah, the Savior, to come. Then all of a sudden these shepherds come around telling you that God told them through angels that He was born right here in your own city. Sounds a little like what's

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:16

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:17

<sup>5</sup> Luke 2:18

happening today doesn't it? The under-shepherd and his helper have and are telling you (as human angels) that your Savior is here right now in Word and Sacrament. Now I don't know about you, but I would at least be curious enough to check it out. (Which may be why a few of you are here today.) It would make sense for me to check it out, assuming I was a good Jew, because I would know that the Savior was to be born in my city.

But these people just marvel and wonder. They think about it, but that's it. This is the response of those who do not have faith. They marvel, "Oh, isn't that interesting," and then go about their business. The Word comes to them, but they smother it, and the active response that comes with it.

Do you ever find yourself doing that? The Faith drives you to do something, to tell someone, but you don't want to do that. Maybe you'll tell somebody tomorrow. Or maybe you'll bring up evangelism or missionaries in church and hope that they'll take care of it for you so that you don't really have to do it. Thankfully, there is forgiveness for these times.

But Faith is an active thing. Faith is also living. If it's not growing, it's dying. Faith bears fruit. And that's not something that we make happen. It is the Spirit who makes that happen. Your Faith will bear fruit, and by it, other people will be able to "see" Jesus as they recognize you as a Christian.

Alternatively, dead faith doesn't produce any fruit. Dead faith is the kind that wonders at things like miracles, but doesn't do anything.

But Faith isn't always expressed like the shepherds' was; they excitedly went out into the world proclaiming the Truth. Sometimes, Faith is quieter. And that doesn't mean that it's not as good or less useful. Let's see Mary's response.

*And Mary preserved all these words bringing them together in her heart.<sup>6</sup>*

In Mary, the Faith is quieter. She isn't about to go out and preach a fire and brimstone sermon. But just because the Faith is quieter in her doesn't make it any less passionate. She preserved all these words, bringing them together in her heart, the very center of her being.

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<sup>6</sup> Luke 2:19

Mary's Faith is different than those who had heard the shepherds. Those who heard the shepherds, heard and marveled. Mary heard and preserved.

Again the Faith is active, it bears fruit. Mary didn't necessarily bear fruit as quickly as the shepherds did, but that's not a bad thing; because Mary did bear fruit. In fact, it is likely that through the Faith which was in Mary and her preserving and bringing together the words, that the Spirit inspired Luke. It is generally accepted, and tradition holds it to be true, that Luke interviewed Mary. From her he got the information about the Nativity that we hear about today. So in a somewhat ironic twist, it is probably because of Mary's quiet expression of the Faith that we hear of the shepherds' loud expression of faith. Speaking of which:

*And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God to all who heard and they saw just as it was spoken to them.<sup>7</sup>*

The shepherds just couldn't keep it inside of them. As I said before, through them the Faith was loud. They were the ones who likely would be shouting it off the mountain tops. And make no mistake that is just as acceptable as Faith being quieter in Mary. You see, what's important isn't whether you have loud Faith or quiet Faith. What's important is that you have the Faith. Mary and the shepherds didn't have different faiths. They all had the same Faith, Christ's Faith.

When we speak of Faith we must make sure that we do not start believing in Faith. I have often started Bible studies with the question, "What do you have to do to get into Heaven?" [Pause] The most frequent answer that I hear to that question is, "I have to believe," or phrased another way, "I have to have faith."

But of course, the question itself is a trick question. The correct answer is, "I don't have to do anything, Jesus already did it for me." Even here on Christmas it can be easy to get lost in

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 2:20

all the talk of the angels, and the shepherds, and the wise men (even though they don't come for a few weeks yet,) and the star, and ... you get the point.

Here on this day, we are celebrating the coming of our Savior. Our Savior Who would take all of our sin onto Himself, and die on a cross in order to ensure that we could be with Him forever. Our Salvation is here. This is what the shepherds believed. This is what Mary believed. This is what I pray you believe. Today you are free to express your Faith in this fact. You can do it loudly like the shepherds. Or you can do it softly like Mary. However you prefer to rejoice, your Lord is here. He has come to save you, and it has been made known to us that He has succeeded.

**Now may the peace which passes all understanding, and which comes from your Savior who has arrived, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

Christmas Day 2014  
Psalm 80:1-7; Micah 5:2-5a; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20

*Vicar Christopher M. Craig*

*Soli Deo Gloria*