

The Upside-Down “Influencers”

The Upside-Down Kingdom—part 2

December 5, 2021

DAY 1: Shepherds, chosen to receive and deliver the message

Luke 2:8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

1. When you think of shepherds what images come to mind?

2. Nobody looked at shepherds as the “beautiful people” or “the glitterati.”
3. Shepherds were at the bottom of the social pyramid. They were uneducated, smelly, tromping around in pastures that sheep had “lived on.” They were at the mercy of the weather—heat during the day, cold at night, wind and rain.
Luke 2:9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”
4. Who appears to the “nobodies” of that world?

5. What is their initial response? Why do you think that was their response?

6. The angel of the Lord begins a series of stunning messages. Jot down your thoughts next to each of the first three messages.
 - a. “Good news” -

 - b. “Great joy” –

 - c. “For all the people” –
7. Of all the people that the angel of the Lord could have chosen to receive and deliver this wondrous message that follows, why do you think God chose shepherds?

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: The most important message God has ever given to mankind

Luke 2:11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

1. The astoundingly good messages just keep on coming! Jot down your thoughts next to each of the following messages.

a. “A savior” –

b. “Born to you” –

c. “The Messiah” –

d. “The Lord” -

2. The angel has just given the location of the birth of the Savior— “the town of David” (Bethlehem).

3. Now, the angel gives “a sign.” Actually, one sign has already been given—the appearance of the angel of the Lord!

a. “A baby wrapped in cloths” -

(The King James Version translated “cloths” as “swaddling clothes.” To our 21st century ears that sounds like expensive baby clothes you’d buy at Babies-Are-Us. The Greek word simply means strips of cloth. The usage would to bundle the baby up like a cocoon, in strips of cloth closer to everyday rags.

b. “Lying in a manger” -

The term can mean a simple shed or a shallow “cave” carved out of the side of a hill. The baby won’t be found in a warm home with a fire, dressed in designer baby clothes!

4. What strikes you about this “sign?”

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: The incredible message of being in right relationship with God

1. Another spectacular sign occurs at the tail end of the stunning message they were just given. Imagine the skies filled with angels singing the praises of God.

*Luke 2:13 Suddenly **a great company of the heavenly host** appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

2. The King James translation of the bible was finished in 1611. This particular passage became very well known. “*Peace on earth, good will toward men.*” (KJV)

3. The English language is under continuous change over the centuries, with numerous nuances of meaning. The translation of the 1611 KJV made sense of the meaning to people living in Europe in that generation.

4. Translation starts with the original language, the Greek, and translates the original words, the meaning of the words and the syntax to the modern reader. The great challenge of translation then becomes to put the original words and meaning into the language of today.

5. The New International translation is true to the Greek text, the meaning of the Greek text and true to our 21st century English.

“...on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

6. The King James Version’s translation, five hundred years later in our modern day English insinuates that just because the baby came, then peace would automatically be part and parcel of our world. That is obviously not true. Just read the morning newspaper.

7. But that is the not the meaning. The verse teaches us that one of the benefits of being in right relationship with God is the outcome of being at peace. This happens when we take Jesus as our savior. He pays the penalty for our sin and is the instrument through which we received God’s favor and grace.

a. We gain peace with God.

b. We have peace with ourselves.

c. We have the power to be at peace with people.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: They checked it out

Luke 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, 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."

Luke 2:16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Acting on the message you hear...

1. It's one thing to hear a message from the Lord. It's quite another thing to actually heed the message, but blessed are those who put the message into action!

Procrastination...

2. There is no procrastination. They don't say, "I'm tired. Let's just go tomorrow."

3. In fact, it's just the opposite of procrastination! "*So they hurried off...*"

4. What drives procrastination? You can point to a lot of human maladies. Fear, perfectionism, a false sense of security, an inability to "seize the moment," or an inability to see the opportunity that should be gobbled up.

Complacency...

5. But, perhaps beneath all procrastination is a spirit of complacency.

Zephaniah 1:12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think, "The LORD will do nothing, either good or bad."

6. We are at the beginning of the explanation of why God chose these "lowly," in the world's eyes, shepherds!

*1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "**Do not consider his appearance** or his height, for I have rejected him. **The LORD does not look at the things people look at.** People look at the outward appearance, but **the LORD looks at the heart.**"*

7. When you deal with procrastination, what is driving you? (Look back at questions 4 and 5). Don't be surprised if you find multiple reasons.

8. Now consider the shepherds. What do you think drove them?

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: They told others the good news

Luke 2:17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ...

1. And here, we find another reason why God chose the “lowly” shepherds. They not only acted on God’s message, but confirmed it, and then “*spread the word.*”
2. Look closely at what they did. How would you have expected this verse to end?

“They spread the word concerning what _____.”

3. You would have expected the ending of the verse to read like this: “...they spread the word concerning what they had seen.”

Instead, it’s “...they spread the word concerning

- *what they had been told them...*
- *...about this child.*”

4. Seeing the child (and the accompanying signs—strips of cloth, and the manger) for themselves confirmed the **message** about the child! It culminated in the **meaning** of this birth!

Luke 2:18 ...and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart....

5. The response of those who heard the testimony of the shepherds was amazement.

6. But, we’re not through with the shepherds just yet.

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

7. Ecstatic worship breaks out among the shepherds! Three reasons are given. Jot down your thoughts next to each of them.

a. “...what they had heard” –

b. “...what they had seen” –

c. “...just as they had been told” -

8. As we wrap up the week, what strikes you about the shepherds?