



Minister
Dan Yeazel, preaching
Kim Johnson

Second Sunday of Advent
December 4, 2005

Luke 2:8-14

Getting Ready

Into to reading: Our passage from Luke this morning is one of the most familiar, and beloved. It tells of the coming of the Christ Child. Let us listen to the wonderful words from Luke.

If you have ever wanted a behind the scenes look at how things happen in heaven. If you have ever wondered who takes care of all the detail in the miracles that happen. Wait no more.

(Angel SKIT)

It has been almost two thousand years now, and people do still remember. The star that shown bright to the shepherds is still visible to us today. As we prepare for Christmas, both in our homes and in our hearts, we do so with a more complete picture than the shepherds had. We know today about Good Friday, we know about Easter. The Shepherds did not know, as we know what a difference this birth would make. Today, we do not pretend that we are waiting for the first

birth of Christ. We know what it means, that Christ has come. We celebrate and remember that God has come to us at Christmas time.

At this time of year friends often greet one another with a cheery "Are you ready for Christmas?" trying not to be too scrooge-like we mutter, or at least I mutter, "Don't ask!" But what does it really mean to be ready for Christmas? If Christmas is the birth of Emmanuel - "God with Us" - How do one get ready for that? What can you buy, or set up to be prepared for God with us? The angels give us some ideas as they announced to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid, but get ready for Good News! They spoke of the true gifts of Christmas- Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Maybe it is time to check our Christmas lists again. What is it we need to do to get ready? Who do we know that needs the gift of comfort or hope? Where do we need comfort and hope? How can we share the gifts of peace, or joy, or love? Would it be very for us to do so? Sometimes the littlest things can make the biggest difference.

How often do we hear "what do you want for Christmas?" meaning stuff and things. When the question is more rightly, "what do you want from Christmas?" what kind of experiences will make this season special, what memories do you hope to create? How do we want to participate in God's love this season?

Ready or not, God's love comes breaking through to shine on all humanity. The shepherds were surprised but willing to follow on faith. Again, the power of God's realm surprises us today and the kings and shepherds years ago, as we find God's will reflected in the innocent face of a infant, born in a stable.

One of our angels this morning wanted a big splashy entrance for God's child. The Coliseum in Rome would have made a pretty big first impression. But that is not what it is about. God is all powerful, all knowing, and all that. But God is also all loving. The way that love is expressed was to come to us as an infant. One who needed to be taken care of, one who would learn and grow. Our

relationship with Christ is like that. It is one that must be nourished and sustained, it is one that will evolve over time, it is one that grows as we grow in faith.

The shepherds were told you will find him, lying in a manger. That drove our less senior angel nuts. To have the Christ child born into the world in the poorest of poor areas, with these shady characters of shepherds as witnesses, what kind of savior is that? Born in Bethlehem?

That kind of savior is one who is will to be vulnerable, in an off-the-beaten path kind of place. One who would-be willing to experience all the pains and poverty that humankind would encounter. Jesus is born, into a humble place of poverty, as far away from where one would expect God to appear. But Bethlehem is where the manger is. Where is our Bethlehem? What area within us do we think is the farthest from God? What would be the last place in the world we think we would expect to encounter the living and loving God?

The surprise of Christmas is that it is in those places, where we will find him. The most remote becomes the central place where the light arrives. As we prepare for Christmas, may we be open to God coming to the most unexpected places. Amen.