

Text in your attendance to # 208.904.3222 Message: Here

Text to give to Real Life, simply text your amount to # 208.515.7441

If you are new with us, text your attendance to # 208.904.3222 Message: New

A Simple Message

We live in a culture that in many ways has obscured the meaning of Christmas. There are a myriad of things that compete for our attention around Christmas time, and the *simplicity* of our devotion to Christ can be quickly compromised.

This week: **A Simple Message**- How God used simple messengers to deliver a simple message.

Do you ever think what God is asking you to do is above your ability, training or knowledge?

As with the shepherds in the Christmas story, *He asks us to be a simple messenger with a simple message.*

Who were the shepherds?

Luke 2:8-20 (NIV) And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 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. 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." 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." 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." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 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. 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.

The shepherds - Bethlehem's shepherds cared for the Temple flock. These men protected and cared for the lambs used in Temple sacrifices.

- They were the outcasts of society, looked down upon and came from the lower rung of society.
- They had no real social standing, influence or voice in their culture.
- The angel brought the *good news* to the lowliest in their culture.

Why God chose the Shepherds.

- The role of a Biblical shepherd gives us great insight into the heart of God.

Psalms 23:1-3 (NIV) The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

- God loves all people. Because shepherds were marginalized by society, in this instance, He chose to reveal His love to those who had the humility to respond to Him.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28 (NIV) But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,

- To affront the pride of the religious leaders, He chose those who weren't *too proud* to tell others.

- Shepherds had nothing to bring or offer Mary and Joseph, only their desire to come and see the baby.

- The Shepherds and Simeon's testimonies confirmed for Mary and Joseph what they had heard through their Angelic visitations.

Luke 2:25-32 (NIV) Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die

before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

- Like the shepherd's encounter with the angel, Simeon also had an encounter with God through the Holy Spirit. He was led to go to the Temple that day, and he immediately recognized Jesus.

How did they respond?

The Shepherds:

They listened, and paid attention to what the angel said.

The shepherds believed and responded.

- They didn't wait. They left immediately for Bethlehem. They were guarding their sheep, but they left their sheep because they were offered something better.

They shared the news with others.

- They told everyone they knew.
- If you are a Christian, you have the role of an ambassador!

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV) We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

- When we receive the good news, our natural response is to tell what God has done.
- We are seed sowers. We can't control the outcome of the message we sow.

Simeon:

What Simeon shared with Mary and Joseph was very important. It was confirmation to Mary and Joseph that they weren't crazy!

- Simeon said Jesus would be the savior of the world.
- Simeon said Jesus would reveal Himself to the Gentiles. A prophetic message.
- Simeon said Jesus would bring glory upon the people of Israel.

Apply:

- Each of us is faced with the decision to respond and GO. Not only to go to church, but to go out into the world and share the message of Jesus.
- Each of us has an opportunity to bring God into our daily encounters. How will you do this?
- Who will you talk to?

For Small Group Discussion:

Main Point: God used simple, ordinary people in the Christmas story. God wants to use us in His continuing story today.

Main Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

- How did the shepherds respond to what they heard?
- How did their response demonstrate faithfulness?
- How did you respond when you heard first about Jesus? Did it sound like good news to you at the time?
- Who have you shared the good news with in the past? How did they respond?
- Who do you know that needs to hear about Jesus this Christmas season?
- How are you centering your Christmas celebrations around the simple message of Jesus' arrival?