

Let's Go See

Luke 2:8-15 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before 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; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

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.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

Let us go and see. Let us go and see.

That's a phrase I associate a lot with Christmas time. Just a couple weeks ago as decorations were starting to come out around town, some of my friends called me up. They had this website with all the best Christmas lights all around Raleigh and they said "Let's go see them." We spent the evening driving from one place to the next and checking out these over-the-

top displays until someone would give us the next address and say “okay... let's go see it.”

Last week right here at Soapstone we had our preschool Christmas chapel. And we joke each year that for every child in the Soapstone Preschool there are three cars of people who come to see them. *Everyone* wants to come see their child, or their sibling, or their grandchild, or niece or nephew. They know these kids will be dressed up and holding up their stairs and candles and singing songs and *of course* they want to see them. They know it's a big deal and even with all the crazy busy-ness of this season they say “Let's go see it.”

But the person I most associate with this phrase, especially at Christmas, is my little brother. Like a lot of brothers, the two of us could not be more different. And one of the ways we are very different is how we start our days. Even when we were kids, we both had alarm clocks. And mine would be set to go off in the morning at the latest possible time for me to be able to get up and physically make it to school, or church, or whatever I was headed to that day.

My brother had an alarm clock and he was not allowed to leave his room until it went off. Otherwise he would be awake at 4:30 in the morning and cooking himself breakfast on the stove. At six years old. He has just always been ready to face the day and excited to *go! go! go!* and had no regard for the other people in the house he'd wake up in that very noisy process.

And this was especially true on Christmas Day. From the time my brother was old enough to talk until... I don't know, we were probably in our twenties... I can remember every year being awakened on Christmas morning by my brother, who felt like if it was late enough that I was awake, he wouldn't be in trouble for being downstairs. He'd poke his head into my room and say “Dan, it's Christmas! Get up! Santa's been here! Let's go see!”

Walking down the stairs I think we'd go through all the emotions that we see in the shepherds in that story. Because we'd go slowly, my brother trying not to make lots of noise, me just stumbling around because I hadn't discovered coffee at that point in my life, and we'd be just a little bit afraid. What if we were up too early in the morning? What if Santa hadn't been yet? What if he was still there and we scared him away and blew the whole

thing? And we'd be a little bit afraid and nervous until one of us would flick on the lights in the family room and for just a moment we'd be amazed and excited and we'd run back upstairs and wake up Mom and Dad and this time we'd both be saying it: "It's Christmas! Get up! Santa's been here! Let's go see!"

The Shepherds were the original kids on Christmas. They're terrified at first. And who wouldn't be? Bang! There's angels around them and all this light and this crazy message. And when it's all over they don't say "okay, let's get the sheep," Right? Because they've got to have scattered. The Bible leaves that part out but I mean my cat goes flying out of the room when the TV gets too loud. After a multitude of angels show up, those sheep have gotta be *gone*. But that's suddenly not the shepherds' concern. They look at one another and they just say "Let's go see." And if I'd had Savannah keep reading that passage of scripture, we'd read that the shepherds go there, they were amazed, and then they returned and praised God and told everyone they knew. They spread the word about this amazing message of a savior being born.

I love that those are their jobs. To see, to be amazed, and to tell about it.

One of my favorite songs is by a band named Caedmon's Call. And they wrote a song called Two Weeks in Africa, this song about the emotional ups and downs of short-term missions. And there's a line in the bridge that says "God doesn't need us, but he let's us put our hands in."

The other characters in this story get a lot of credit for the things they contributed. Mary says "yes" to God and becomes Jesus' mother. Joseph stays with her and takes care of them both. The wise men travel vast distances and bring precious gifts. The shepherds are just sort of there. They don't have any long-term relationships here. They don't have precious things to bring. They can't even say "oh, we've got someplace better than a stable to stay," they've been outside with their flocks. They're just there. They get to put their hands in. They're invited by the angel. They're included. They're gathered in, for no other reason than to just see what God is doing. They just go see.

This is my niece, Riley. She was just born a few weeks ago, and *she* is now the reason my brother is regularly awake at 4:30 in the morning. And every time I talk to him I ask "Did Riley do anything new today? New tricks?"

Rolling over? Doing calculus? Reciting the preamble to the Constitution?" And he says "She just mostly sleeps." Every picture my sister-in-law posts in the family photo album looks like this. There's Riley. She's awful cute... And she's asleep. She doesn't do a whole lot. And yet we're amazed by her.

The Shepherds went and saw a baby. And I can't imagine he did a whole lot right then that night. And yet they were amazed. And not only were they the first kids on Christmas, amazed at what they saw, they were really the first Christian missionaries. They went and told everyone they knew about it. They shared the good news. The hope, the beauty, the wonder, the prophecy fulfilled, it was all too good to keep to themselves.

Sometimes it's our job to bring something of value to the Lord. Sometimes it's our job to tell God's people about the wonderful things he's been doing. Sometimes, times like tonight when we are invited and included and gathered in to hear this story, and see this story in just a couple minutes, it's our job to stop and be amazed. God doesn't need us, but he let's us put our hands in. We've got lots of young people who are going to put their hands in and tell God's great good news tonight. Let's be amazed by that. Let's recognize the hope and the love expressed in Jesus, in God with us. Let's go see.