

# Sermon Notes

## 15<sup>th</sup> December 2019

### Luke 2:1-20

#### Advent: Why the shepherds?

##### An ordinary birth

- We all have a picture of a typical nativity scene, although the shepherds come from Luke and the Wise Men from Matthew – they weren't there at the same time!
- Some of our picture is traditional, rather than from the Bible.
- Luke, in chapter 1:57-79, tells us about the birth of John the Baptist, and it's full of miracles and songs of praise.
- The tone changes with the birth of Jesus, and it almost sounds ordinary – a baby born to a poor couple – there are no angels or miracles at the birth.
- Luke does tell us how it came to happen in Bethlehem (King David's town) rather than Nazareth. How Jesus was 'son of David'.
- The word translated 'inn' (v7) could just as easily mean 'normal living accommodation'. Joseph had family connections with Bethlehem, so rules of hospitality would demand they be taken in. But unmarried and obviously pregnant. Probably many other more important relations. Needed privacy for the birth. So better all round if they go in the stable.
- Not necessarily shared with the animals, but would have had a feeding trough (manger). That seems important to Luke, he mentions it 3 times!
- But, otherwise, just a baby born to an unimportant, poor, couple.

##### Why the shepherds?

- Bethlehem was crowded – full of David's descendants. If you wanted to make an announcement about a king in David's line, surely that's where you'd do it.
- But the angel goes out of town, to one small group of shepherds.
- Not just one angel, but a whole choir! And this is their only appearance.
- Why the shepherds? Shepherds were low status, unimportant.
- Seems so wasteful.

##### Who is this child?

- What is the angels' announcement? A child has been born, in David's town. He is Saviour, Messiah and Lord.
- It comes with a sign to prove it to you. Of all the babies in Bethlehem, he's the one you'll find in an animal feeding trough (that manger again!).
- Rush to Bethlehem and find him just there (3<sup>rd</sup> mention of manger).
- What was once the parents' secret (Luke 1:32-33, Matthew 1:20-21) is now confirmed, unprompted, by an outside witness.

- This baby has very high titles, Saviour, Messiah and Lord.
- Puts God's kingdom in conflict with the kingdoms of the world.
- King Herod (appears in Matthew) who thought he was king of the Jews.
- Caesar Augustus, who already had the titles of saviour, son of god and lord.
- We see vulnerability, weakness, threat. But this baby is destined to be king of the whole world.
- In the end, he even conquered Caesar.

##### The kingdom's guest list

- This baby has a kingdom, and it has a guest list (see Luke 14:12-14, 21).
- In contrast to the world's kingdoms, it's the outsiders who are invited.
- So, why the shepherds? Its for the likes of them.
- This is not wasteful, this is a new king, who calls us all to himself.
- Although weak and vulnerable, he has power to conquer the world.
- At his name every knee will bow (Philippians 2:10-11).

##### Space for your notes

*Written by Ian McLenaghan, December 2019*