

December 31, 2023

SHEPHERDS: WHAT NEXT? Luke 2.16-20

The shepherds were among the first witnesses to the Christ child. We read in 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.

But what happened next? Their lives had to have been altered as a result of this encounter. As we've encountered Christ during this Christmas season how might our lives be changed as we enter a brand new year?

The shepherds are transformed as a result of seeing the Christ-child.

They look **BACK**: They **REMEMBER** and **PRAISE**.

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Psalm 103 1-5

And I said, "This is my fate; the Most High has turned his hand against me." But then I recall all you have done, O Lord; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works. O God, your ways are holy.

Psalm 77.10-13a NLT

They look **IN**: They discover who they **REALLY ARE**.

*This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. **We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children.** And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!*

Romans 8.15-17 MSG

They look **OUT**: They **REFLECT** God's love and **CARE** for the **WORLD**.

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.** ... All this is for your benefit, **so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.***

2 Corinthians 4.7-10; 15

Our Shepherd's motto for the new year:

More **GRATITUDE**, New **ATTITUDE**, Wider **LATITUDE**!

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What is God saying to me?

What am I going to do about it?