

INTRODUCTION **SLIDE** ADVENT

Hey Merry Christmas, church!

Welcome to our Christmas Eve candle-light service.

- Yeah, we gonna light some stuff on fire!

And hey, if you're uncomfortable with a real candle...

- I got you!
- Just, when we light the candles...
- You go ahead and pull out your phone and turn on the light...
 - Or, if you brought your parents or grandparents...
 - it's probably been on for a while...

Hey, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Luke chapter 2.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Luke 2,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find Luke 2 on page **857**.

INTRODUCTION: SINGING

Hey, you look good, church! You clean up pretty well!

- Like, better than average good!
 - This is one of the few Sundays each year...
 - where I'll preach...
 - without an embroidered animal on my shirt.
- And you sounded good!
 - Gosh don't you love singing...
 - those Christmas songs together?

But I've noticed some problems with some of my favorite Christmas songs.

- They're just not quite right.

So, here for you today, I want to present my top incorrect Christmas lyrics,

- which I hope, in turn,
- ruins your holiday experience.
 - Merry Christmas!

First, from the song, "I Saw Three Ships." You know this one?

- *I saw three ships come sailing in...*
- *on Christmas day on Christmas day.*

Well, there's a verse that goes like this:

- *"O they sailed to Bethlehem,*
- *On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;*
- *O they sailed to Bethlehem,*
- *On Christmas Day in the morning."*

Yo, Bethlehem is landlocked!

- Is this some attempt at a maritime Christmas carol?
- Pitch that one in the trash.
 - Sorry Nat King Cole.

Second, from the song, "Silent Night."

I talked about this one a couple weeks ago:

- *"Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright."*

Now, we took a natural birth class before Harper was born.

- And here's the deal...
 - there's nothing silent.
 - calm,
 - or bright about the birth process...

That song should be renamed Crazy Night or something like that.

Third, from the song, "Away in a Manger."

There's this one line that always gets me in this song.

- *"The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,*
- *But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes."*

Ok, we have a bunch of new parents in here...you tell me:

- if your baby wakes up and a cow is mooing in his face,
- you think there's no crying coming from that kid?

TRANSITION

But one song,

- which relates to our text tonight,
- actually helped me interpret the text correctly.

So, Bing Crosby made famous the song, "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

- And I think that's what the main point of our text...
- concerning the **SLIDE SHEPHERDS & ANGELS**

How do you hear?

How do you listen?

- How you respond to the Christmas message...
- is of the utmost importance.

EXPLAIN: LISTENING

And I was thinking about it this week...but hearing is kind of a tricky thing.

- Because you have all likely HEARD this story.
- But have you really LISTENED to it?

Think about that with me...

- when you're not listening...
- you don't realize you're not listening.

Have you ever thought about that?

- Someone comes to you...
 - maybe, hypothetically, it's your wife...
 - this certainly has never happened to me...
- but let's just say my wife came up to me and said,
 - *"Hey, I've been talking to you!"*
 - *Aren't you listening?"*
- And I look up from my phone or whatever,
- and I say, *"Oh, I'm sorry. What did you say?"*

You see, you never know when you're not listening.

- **Cause if you know you're not listening...**
- **you actually are!**
 - **Isn't that weird.**

TRANSITION

Well, I want us to talk about how to HEAR the Christmas message.

- Cause you can HEAR it...
- and not HEAR it at the same time!

So, let's dig into this,

- and we'll actually breeze through the first,
 - more familiar section,
- and land in the second half.

Luke 2, starting in verse 8:

LUKE 2:8-14

[8] And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they

were filled with great fear. [10] And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. [11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths 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, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

EXPLAIN: SHEPHERDS

So, this is it! That’s the passage!

- It’s the classic text...
- which we hear preached...
- most Christmases...
 - and even if you weren’t raised in the church, like me...
 - I knew this passage from Charlie Brown Christmas.
- Right? This is the text that Linus quotes!

And gosh, there is so much there,

- but the thing to note in this section for our purposes...
- is just how very ordinary those shepherds were!

Every preacher in the history of Christmas points out...

- that shepherds being involved in this story at any level...
- would have been shocking...
- because of their lowly state in the culture.

But just like we’ve said in this whole Advent season...

- God comes to really ordinary people.
 - He doesn’t show up to the elite

- and the famous
- and the religious
- and the capable.
- No! Not at all.
- They're a completely ordinary group of blue-collar dudes.

TRANSITION

So, that's the famous section,

- which you've maybe heard preached...
- but the text goes on.

Verse 15:

LUKE 2:15-16

[15] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." [16] And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

EXPLAIN: RESPONSE

And I don't know why this struck me this week in this particular way,

- but I love that,
 - when these ordinary shepherds
 - hear the good news heralded to THEM,
 - of all people,
 - by the host of angels...
- they say, "*We gotta go see it!*"

And what I found in my heart as I was studying this passage:

- is that if I'm not careful,
- my response to Christmas can kinda develop...
- in the opposite direction.
 - You know what I mean?
- I can HEAR the story...
- and respond with a kind of rote routine of,
 - *"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Of course that's true..."*
 - *"What are we doing for lunch/dinner?"*

But what I love about these shepherds is,

- upon HEARING from the Lord,
- they didn't go,
 - *"That was nice."*
 - *"Now, let's get back to shepherding!"*

No, they said, *"The Lord made this known to us; now we gotta go see it!"*

- They drop everything to go and see!
 - Like, what did they do with the sheep?
 - No idea! Completely irresponsible!

APPLICATION/TRANSITION

But listen,

- it does you no good to be heralded...
 - the good news of great joy...
- and then do NOTHING with it!

And churches, especially this time of year,

- are filled with all kinds of people who have HEARD...
- but have yet to respond!

But the shepherds responded.

- Now, look at what happens next,
- because I think it's really the main point.

Verse 17:

LUKE 2:17

[17] And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

EXPLAIN: JUST SHEPHERDS

So, just note:

- they heard the message...
- they responded by going to see it...
 - and once they saw it...
- they couldn't help but share it.

They made known what had been told them.

- So, they heard...
- AND saw...
- AND told.

That's the rhythm of how we ought to respond to the Christmas message.

But then, something totally wild occurred.

No more angels!

That fact never dawned on me until this week.

- The ordinary shepherds got the message from the angels.
- But everyone else only gets the message from the shepherds.

The shepherds get the angels...and all we get are shepherds.

Isn't that interesting?

- You see, I haven't ever HEARD from an angel...
 - maybe you have...
- but I haven't.

But I'd imagine it's pretty easy to pay attention. Right?

- Like, when an angel appears,
- and you fall to the ground,
- and you feel the searing brilliance of their glory,
- I'd imagine it's pretty hard NOT to pay attention!

But listen, most of us,

- won't hear the message of Jesus from an angel...
- it'll be from a shepherd.
 - It'll be from a mom or dad.
 - It'll be from a Sunday school teacher or pastor.
 - It'll be from a friend at work or a neighbor.

And that can sometimes cause us to question the veracity of the message,

- because...gosh...they're just ordinary shepherds.
- We can see their flaws!

You see, most of us get the message of Jesus in very ordinary ways...

- in ways that we might overlook...
- in ways we might ignore...
 - from a shepherd.

TRANSITION

But then Luke, I think, is trying to show us the importance of hearing well.

- Cause look how people respond...
- to hearing from these ordinary shepherds...
- the greatest news ever!

- That the Messiah had been born!

Look at how they HEAR.

Verse 18:

LUKE 2:18-19

[18] And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. [19] But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

EXPLAIN

So, all who heard it wondered...and then the text says BUT MARY.

- So, Mary is the contrast here...
- of how to hear this message.

First the crowd: the word wondered isn't to be scoffed at.

- They all wondered.
- They were amazed.
 - Some commentators think that everyone is amazed...
 - that it was shepherds who would bring such news.
 - Other commentators believe that they were genuinely...
 - wondering at the message of the birth of the Messiah.

But regardless...the crowd who heard it ARE CONTRASTED with Mary.

- They hear the message,
- and maybe, in the moment, they're pumped!
 - They wondered...
- but it doesn't last...

as contrasted with Mary's response.

You see, Mary, it says treasured up these things, and pondered them.

She doesn't say,

- *"I don't have to listen to these shepherds.*
- *I already got an angel of my own!"*

No, she **treasured** and **pondered**.

The Greek word for **pondered** is more of a cognitive word.

- It literally means *to put in context* or *to connect*.
 - So, Mary is taking the message of the shepherds...
 - and working to fit it into her total understanding.
- So, she's **pondering**...
- she's doing some very intense mental disciplines here.

But she's also **treasuring up these things**.

- This is a more emotional word.
- It has to do with the heart.
- The word literally means *to keep something alive*.
 - It's like nursing a campfire with sticks and kindling.
- It's to relish
- and savor
- and preserve something you don't want to lose.

So, Mary doesn't only cognitively hear the message...

she also fans the flame of her heart.

- It's both.
- It's emotional and rational.
- It's head and it's heart.

CONCLUSION SLIDE W/PADS

And I wonder how you are HEARING this Christmas?

In the Gospels,

- Jesus tells a parable about seed being thrown...

- on different types of soils.
 - And this parable means that there are different ways...
 - to receive and hear God's Word.

The seed is God's Word.

- And the sower plants the word in different soils...
 - four different soils...
 - four different ways to hear the word...
 - four different results.

And the point of that parable...is that most people hear...but don't hear.

And listen,

- some people simply don't believe that Jesus is the Messiah...
 - and I get that.
- But some would say they DO believe...
 - but they don't treasure it in their hearts...
 - they don't ponder it...
- they don't let it come in and change their lives.

Do not underestimate your ability to hear and not hear.

- Do you want to be like the crowd that just marvels?
- Or do you want to be like Mary?

The reason, I think, that most of us miss what God is doing in our lives,

- is because it comes in a form of that we aren't expecting.

You see,

- we expect big and impressive.
- We want an angel and the heavenly host!
 - When God shows up in our life,
 - we expect big, monumental, life altering change.

But the work of God almost always begins smaller than expected.

- It's a message about a baby...
- born to a poor family...
- told to you by common shepherds.

So, how are you listening?

How are you hearing the Christmas message?

- Unto you is born this day
- in the city of David a Savior,
- who is Christ the Lord.

Are you treasureing and pondering?

- Or are you like the crowd,
 - hearing the message,
 - wondering at it,
- only to go home without letting it change you deeply?

Do you hear what I hear?

To those who have ears...let them hear.

Let's pray together.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- Bock, Darrell L. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Luke 1:1-9:50.
- Hughes, R. Kent. Preaching the Word. Luke.
- Keller, Tim. *Listening to God*.
- Keller, Tim. *Responding to Jesus' Birth*.