

# Family Service

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 16 December 2018

Preacher: David MacPherson

[0:00] Right, well I have something I want to share with all of you guys. Now I feel with the children I'm at a little bit of a disadvantage because I want to tell you the story about the angel speaking to the shepherds.

But you know what I'm thinking? I'm thinking they all know it really well already. And I'm thinking this could be difficult because everything I say you'll be thinking, we know that, we know that.

And maybe I'll say something and you'll be thinking, well I don't think that's right, I think the minister's got it wrong. That's happened before. I'm not looking at anybody in particular, so I need to be very careful when I tell the story.

But for the benefit of everybody else who maybe doesn't know the story as well as you guys do, you can listen in as well. Now, are you good at imagining?

Who's good at, lift up your hand if you're good at imagining. Wow, okay, so we've a few good imaginers, if that's a word. And what I want you to do is I want you to imagine that you're the shepherds in the story.

[1:11] Okay, so you know the story. So you've got to imagine that you're the shepherds in the story. Now, the Bible tells us that it was at nighttime, and so it would have been dark, I guess.

And it may have been some stars, we've given a little bit of light, but it was nighttime, so it would have been dark. What else? How would you think you would have been feeling in the fields looking after your sheep near Bethlehem on that night?

How do you think you would have felt? Yeah, how do you think you would have felt? Scared?

Scared, maybe a little bit scared, because there might have been some wild animals wanting to steal the sheep. That's why you needed to stay wide awake, or try and stay wide awake.

How else do you think you might have felt? Lily, how do you think you would have felt? Tired, I think so. Because, listen, if it gets to about like 11, half past 11, I zonk out watching the news.

So imagine if you had to stay up all night looking after sheep, you'd be tired. What else? Yeah? Grumpy. Grumpy. Well, maybe, maybe, maybe the shepherds were grumpy.

[2:12] We're not told, but I guess we could speculate that one or two of them might have been grumpy. Yeah? What about, what do you think? Aurel. A bit nervous, maybe.

Maybe a bit nervous. Like, they knew what they were doing. They'd probably done it quite a lot of times, but even so, I'll say one more idea. Yeah, Lily, what do you think? Alone.

Yeah? Like, I don't know how many there were. We're not told how many there were. We're told they were shepherds, so they'd have had each other, but maybe, maybe they felt alone in that they weren't with their families.

Maybe they'd have liked to have been with their, their families, the other children. I imagine some of them would have had children, but the children wouldn't have been there. So in that sense, they might have felt a wee bit alone. So anyway, so you're imagining that you're, you're the shepherds, okay?

And you're looking after the sheep, just like you've done so many, many times before. And then, suddenly, you look into the sky, and there's an angel looking right at you.

[3:12] And the angel's looking right at you. Well, you think it's an angel. You've never seen an angel before, but it's in the sky, and it's looking down at you, so it probably is an angel, and that's come from heaven.

Now, how would you feel now, when suddenly this angel's appeared, and is looking at you? Yeah. Shocked. I think you would have felt very shocked. Any other words? Any good adjectives?

A bit like... Not grumpy anymore? No. Shocked. Scared. Still a little bit, yeah? I think you're getting, yeah? Any other, yeah? Lily.

Amazed. That's a good one. Yes, Zoe. Happy. Maybe a bit happy as well. Yeah? Ariel, how would you feel when the angel appears? Yeah, he hasn't said anything yet. A little bit frightened.

A little bit frightened, I think. And they might be a little bit scared, but the angel said don't be scared. That's true, but the angel hasn't said that yet, so, but you're right. You're right.

[ 4 : 11 ] So that gives us a clue as to how they felt, actually, if the angel had to say don't be afraid. So, lots of things you might have been feeling. But as Ariel has just mentioned, and one or two of you others mentioned as well, we actually know how they felt, because the story tells us, the story tells us that they were terrified.

Now, what does terrified mean? Yeah, Lily, what does terrified mean? Really, really frightened. I was trying to work out how to explain what terrified means, and what I thought would be a way of explaining it, and it's maybe not completely right, but imagine being scared, okay? Imagine being scared. Now, imagine being ten times more scared. That would be terrified. So it's like really, really, really ten times scared.

It would take too long to do the really ten times, but it's very, very, very, very, very scared. That's what terrified means, and that's what the Bible tells us. The shepherd were terrified. So there you are.

You're looking up into the sky. The angel is looking at you, and the Bible tells us that there was this bright light, the glory of the Lord shone around the angel. So I would imagine, I'm just imagining this, but I would imagine it might even have been quite difficult to keep your eyes open, because just the shining all around the angel, but you're looking up, and it's just an amazing sight.

[ 5 : 30 ] And now comes the really important part of the story, because the angel has a message for you. I know the message. You know the message.

That's right. Well, you just keep it in, keep it in, Ariel, okay? Because then that way I'll be able to tell it to everybody, and you can keep me right if I get it wrong, okay? That's your job.

So I hope I don't get it wrong. So that's the important part, that there's a message for the, for the shepherds. Now, actually, there had to be a message, because that's what angels are.

Angels are God's messengers. So if you see an angel, you know that there's a message. So there's a wee tip for you. If you ever see an angel, you can be sure that there's a message coming, because that's what they do.

It's a bit like, it's a bit like, to help you understand that, although I think you've understood it already, but imagine if you're in your house, you look out the window, and you see the postman coming. Do you think he's going to knock on the door and say, hello, I've come for a cup of tea?

[ 6 : 28 ] Now, why has he come to the house? Because he was going to send it, and then wrote with a message. That's right.

Well, that's his job, isn't it? That's what postmen do. They give us letters or packages or whatever it is. So you see the postman, you know what he's there for. It's a bit like that with an angel. If you see an angel, then you know there must be a message. And there was.

There's a message. Now, I wonder what the shepherds thought there. You're thinking or imagining that you're the shepherds. Not only have you seen an angel, but then you've kind of worked it out. He must have a message, and a message for us, and we're just shepherds.

I wonder if some of them were thinking, well, if an angel comes from heaven, surely he's going to go and give a message to the king in Jerusalem, or to maybe a prophet, or maybe somebody in the temple in Jerusalem.

Some of the really important people, if God has a message, surely the message would be for them. But this angel has come, and he's got a message for us. So that must have been pretty crazy for the shepherds to think about.

[ 7 : 32 ] So there's a message, and that's the really important part. So we need to listen very carefully to what the message is, and every part of it. Now, the very first thing that the angel says to the shepherds, what is it?

You know this, because you just sang it a moment ago. It was the very first thing that the angel said. You can just shout it out, anybody. That thing, they were, the singing was, they were singing, and then the singing filled the sky, and then the angels filled the message, and then the shepherds were suppressed, and then they went to find the king.

Right, well, you're giving the whole, the big picture. You're giving the big picture, but actually, actually, and this is, I've got, I'm one up on you guys in this one, because the song that you sang

did it the wrong way around, and they had the, don't be afraid at the end, but don't be afraid was at the beginning.

So, so one point for the minister. So, the first thing, the first thing that the angel said to the shepherds was, don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid. And in a sense, that wasn't really part of the message. Like, it's good that the angel said it, and it shows that the angel was concerned about the shepherds and didn't want them to be afraid.

[ 8 : 46 ] Maybe the angel wanted them to be thinking carefully about what was going to be said, and if they'd been terrified, they wouldn't have been thinking carefully. Because if you're really terrified, your brain doesn't work properly.

That's true. So, the angel thought, well, I've got to try and just help them not to be afraid so that they can listen to the message. So, it was kind of like part of the message, but really, it was just to help the shepherds to not be afraid and be able to listen to the message.

Now, what's the next thing that the angel says? Well, the next thing the angel says is to tell them what kind of news that he's bringing. So, it's still not really the message, but it's telling them what kind of message.

And the angel said this, I bring you good news of great joy. So, he still hasn't told them what the good news is, but he's telling them that it's good news.

Now, we read that, we say, of course it's good news, but it might have been bad news. You know, sometimes somebody brings a message, it's not always good news. I know, in the house, for example, if I hear the telephone ring at like midnight or five in the morning, I'm immediately thinking, oh no, what is it?

[ 9 : 57 ] Because I know there's a message and I'm worried that it might be bad news. Of course, it might be good news, but it might be bad news. Well, when the angel appeared, the angel had a message, but the shepherds didn't know if it was going to be good news or bad news, but the angel tells them that it's good news.

I bring you good news of great joy. So this is news that would make the shepherds and everybody heard it happy and rejoice. But then the angel also tells the shepherds who the news is for.

Because he says this, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people. So it's for everybody. It's not just for really important people, or it's not just for people who go to church or for people who know the Bible very well.

No, it's good news for everybody, said the angel. It's good news for all the people. And when we say that, it's important to understand and to realize that when the angel said that, he didn't just mean all the people who lived then, 2,000 years ago.

He really meant all the people. So that includes us here today in Bonacord, in Aberdeen. This good news of great joy is for us as well. It's for all the people. And we are included in all the people.

[ 11 : 19 ] But then the angel has something else to say about the news without really still saying what the news is. And the angel says when this good news is happening.

Because the angel starts the next thing that he says with today. Today something is happening. I wonder if that made it even more exciting for the shepherds. Today. We don't know what it is yet, but it's today.

Wow. What's happening today? And then the angel tells them where it's going to happen. So they still don't know what the news is, but they know it's good news.

They know it's going to make people happy. They know it's for everybody. They know that it's today. And now they also know where, because the angel says today in the town of David.

Well, that was just a name that they used for Bethlehem because Bethlehem, King David was from Bethlehem. So that was really Bethlehem's claim to fame. You know how in Aberdeen sometimes, I don't know if you've seen in some houses there'll be a plaque outside and it says some famous person was born there.

[ 12 : 24 ] Now normally I read those plaques and I think, I've never heard of him, but that's just because I'm ignorant. But more clever people read the plaques and say, oh wow, he was born in that house. Well, Bethlehem's claim to fame was that King David was from there.

So it was known as the town of David. And the shepherds would have known that. So they thought, wow, in Bethlehem, that's just over there. So this good news is not just today, but it's so near to where we are right now.

And that would have made it even more exciting for them. And then finally, the angel gets to tell them what the news is. And what is the news?

Well, it's this. A savior has been born. Now, I wonder what part of that the shepherds thought about first of all. And just maybe that a baby had been born.

And I wonder if they just thought that, they might have thought, well, okay, that's good news. It's always good news when a baby's born. People are happy and it's always good news. But maybe I thought, well, there's lots of babies born in Bethlehem.

[13:27] It's not that big a deal. But of course, it wasn't just any baby, though any baby is special. But this was a very special baby because the angel said that this baby born was a savior.

A savior had been born. Now, what does that mean? What was the savior going to save people from? If we think about the shepherds, was the savior going to maybe save the shepherds from the wild animals? Do you think?

Could that? Have I been a savior to save them from the wild animals or from having to work so hard? What do you think, Matty? What was the baby going to save the shepherds and other people from?

Our sin. Our sin. Yeah, that's right. That's why I've got my bit of paper, so that's good. We're agreed on that. It says he will save all kinds of people all over the world from their sin.

A savior from our sin, from our doing what we think is best and not what God says we should do, from being selfish instead of serving others in all kinds of ways that we fall short of what God asks us to do.

[14:31] And this savior is going to save us from the consequences of that sin, from the punishment of that sin. And then there's something else that the angel said. So it's not that many words. If you count the words, there's not that many words, but there's a lot in them.

He says, a savior has been born to you. Just those two wee words, to you, are so important because the angel is saying this savior is for you. He's already said that it's good news for all the people, but it's almost as if he's saying just in case you're not sure if you're included, well, you are. A savior has been born to you. And that's really important for all of us to listen to. Even now, a savior has been born to you. Whoever you are today, the savior who was born was born to you, was born for you.

This is a message not just for the shepherds, but for us today. And then the angel has something else to say about this savior. He tells us a little bit more about who he is because then the angel says, he is Christ the Lord.

It's almost as if the shepherds might have been asking, well, that's great, a savior, but who is he? And the angel says, well, I'll tell you who he is. He's Christ the Lord. Now, the shepherds, I would imagine, because of the work that they did, they would have been very busy, and they probably were quite poor as well, so I don't think they'd have had many chances to maybe go to the big temple in Jerusalem.

[15:54] Maybe they didn't even go to the synagogue that often, but they would have known about Messiah, about somebody who God had promised to come and be a savior for Israel.

And so when they heard this, they'd have known, oh, right, so this baby that's been born in Bethlehem is the promised Messiah, and that's really what Christ means, an anointed one.

And so this is the one who had been born in Bethlehem, the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one. He's come, he's arrived, he's been born in Bethlehem today. Now, the importance about understanding who this Messiah or anointed one is, the anointed just means that somebody has oil put in their head.

Now, in the Old Testament, when you hear about somebody being anointed, it would probably have been maybe a priest or a king or a prophet. They were anointed to set them aside for this important job that God was giving them.

[16:59] Well, Jesus was all three of them rolled together. He was a prophet, the one who brought the Word of God. Indeed, he was the Word of God, but he was also a priest, but a very special kind of priest because he wouldn't offer a sacrifice of an animal, but offer himself as a sacrifice for sin.

And he was a king, and not just any kind of king, a king even more important than King David, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the anointed one, the Messiah, the promised Savior.

So, this is the one who'd been born in Bethlehem. Now, the last thing I want you to think about is to think about what the shepherds did. So, they got the message, and I think we can find that when

they got this good news, they did three things, and I think it's the three things we should do as well with the good news.

So, the first thing that we find, or that we're going to mention them doing, is that they celebrate the good news. Of course, it wasn't just the shepherds. You've sung about how the angels were celebrating the good news.

Glory to God in the highest. But the shepherds soon joined in in celebrating the good news. In the passage that we read in the Bible, we read, the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen.

[ 18 : 22 ] So, that's one thing we need to do with good news. Celebrate it. And, what better celebration than praising God for this good news. That's one thing. But another thing they did, which I think we can do as well, even though we're not near Bethlehem, but we can still do this.

What the next thing they did was that they wanted to find out more. So, they'd received this message about a baby born in Bethlehem who was Christ the Lord and they didn't think, well, that's great and, well, we'll just leave it there.

No, the first thing they want to do is to go to Bethlehem to see the baby and discover more about the one who had been born in Bethlehem. They wanted to find out more. And that's something we can all do.

We can find out more about Jesus, who He is and why He came and not just how He was born, but the life He lived and the death He died and the resurrection and how He's alive today and what He can do for us and how we can serve Him.

So, there's so much more to find out about Jesus. That's what the shepherds wanted to do. And then the third thing that the shepherds did that we can do is that they shared the good news with others.

[ 19 : 30 ] What does the Bible say? It says, when they had seen Him, so they'd been to Bethlehem, they'd seen the baby, when they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.

So, they told other people about this Jesus who was Christ the Lord. And that's what we can do as well. We celebrate the good news. We want to find out more about Jesus.

And we can share what we do discover with others. So, that's something for all of us. That's some Christmas homework for all of us to do. Those three things, okay? Celebrate, praise God, find out more, and share with others.

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your Son, Jesus, our Savior. We thank You for His coming into the world, for His being born in Bethlehem. We thank You for the message of the angel identifying the one born as the Savior, Christ the Lord. We pray that all of us here this morning would know what it is to relate to Jesus as our Savior, that we would be able to testify to the saving work that He has done in our lives, saving us from our sin, and helping us become friends with You.

[ 20 : 54 ] We do pray that You would help all of us to respond to this good news in much the same manner as the shepherds did, that it would be cause for celebration and praise and worship to You, that it would be our desire to learn more and more about Jesus and to share what we discover with others.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.