

Family Service

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[0 : 0 0] My name is David. I'm ten years old, and I live in a little town called Bethlehem in Israel.

I live there with my mom and dad and my brothers and sisters. We're not very rich. We're actually quite poor, but we're very happy. And most of my friends don't have much money either, but we still are able to have a lot of fun. I don't see very much of my dad. The reason I don't see much of my dad is because of the work that he does. My dad is a shepherd.

I wonder if you know what a shepherd is? Well, I'll tell you. I'm just going to tell you, okay? I'm going to say everything now, okay? You just listen, because if I let you speak, then I might forget my story. So you just listen, okay? My dad's a shepherd, and he looks after lots and lots of sheep, but they're not his own sheep. I wish they were his own sheep, but they're not. He looks after other people's sheep, but he looks after them as if they were his own sheep. You know, sometimes my mom, when she's a little bit cross, says that my dad looks after his sheep more than he looks after us. But that's not true. He doesn't really, and she doesn't really mean that. Well, some of the older children in Bethlehem tease me, and they tease me because they say that to be a shepherd is a job for losers. Only losers are shepherds. They don't make much money.

It's a very dirty job. You've got to be out in the cold and in the storms, and it's a job for losers. And they tease me like that, but I don't believe them. I know it's true that my dad doesn't make much money. I know that it's a very difficult job, but I also know that you have to be very brave to be a shepherd because wild animals try and steal the sheep, especially the little lambs. They want to steal them, to eat them, and my dad has to protect all the little sheep, and he's very brave, and he frightens away all the wild animals. But you know, some of these older children, they still carry on teasing me about my dad being a shepherd, and they say, oh, you'll probably be a shepherd as well. But then I say something to them that shuts them up really good. You know what I say to them? I say, well, you don't think shepherds are very important, but what about King David? King David was the very best king in all of Israel. He was the wisest, the richest, the most powerful king we've ever had. I think he was the best king in all the world. And do you know where King David was from? Well, I'll tell you. King David was from Bethlehem, where I'm from. In fact, the reason I'm called David is because my mom and dad think that he was such a wonderful king. And he was from Bethlehem. But you know something else about

King David? You've probably all heard about when he killed the giant Goliath. And everybody knows about that, and everybody knows that after that he became the king, this wonderful king. But do you know what he was before he killed Goliath? I think some of you maybe do know. Well, he was a shepherd.

[3 : 3 6] So you see, shepherds are very, very special. In fact, he thought being a shepherd was so very special that he wrote a song. And he said that God is like a shepherd. So I don't listen to these other boys who tease me because my dad's a shepherd, because to be a shepherd is something very, very special.

Well, I want to tell you about how my dad, although he's a shepherd, and I don't think he'll ever become a king, but I want to tell you about a time when he met a king, a very important king. In fact, a king who's even more important than King David. I didn't think that was possible, but there is a king who's even more important than King David. And my dad met that king. I'll tell you what he's called. He's called King Jesus. Well, I'm going to tell you about when that happened. Now, I'll try and tell you the way it happened as well as I can. And all the important things I'll tell you are just the way they were, just the way my dad told me. But my dad couldn't tell me the whole story. And so maybe there'll be one or two things I say that I'm not sure if they're exactly true, just to make you hear the whole story. But the important parts, they're all totally true. They're what my dad told me happened to him. And he saw that day when he met King Jesus. Well, I'll tell you a little bit about how it all happened. The story goes a little bit like this. It was just a normal night. Dad and his friends were looking after the sheep in the fields outside Bethlehem. And it's quite difficult to stay awake all night when you're maybe very tired and there's a nice fire burning and you really want to fall asleep. But me and my dad and his friends, they would tell stories or they would tell each other jokes or sometimes they would sing a song. And that way they would stay awake right through the night.

But on this night, just a night like any other, but on this night, something very strange happened. Something very, very, very strange happened. An angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around them, around my dad and his friends. Well, that had never happened before. And you're maybe thinking, well, I don't even know what that means. What does it mean that an angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around? What's that all about? Well, I'll try and explain, though it's not that easy. Maybe the first part's not too difficult. An angel is like a messenger. It's one of God's special messengers. And angels live in heaven, but when God has something very important to say, one of the ways he can tell us is by sending a messenger, sending an angel. And so this angel came because he had a message, a very important message to deliver from God. But then my dad also said that the glory of the Lord shone around them. Not really very sure what that means, but what dad explained to me is that it means that God himself was there. The bright light was a sign.

That God was there. You see, we can't see God face to face, but his glorious light shines. And that way, my dad and his friends, they weren't very sure how, but they just knew that God was there.

How do you think my dad felt when this happened, this very strange thing happened that had never happened before? Well, I did say that my dad was very, very brave. And he is very, very brave. But I'll tell you this, he was very, very afraid. When I say he was afraid, it's not the kind of afraid that maybe if an older boy, maybe a bully at school is saying that he's going to hit you or he's going to hurt you, and you're afraid and you want to run away. It wasn't that kind of afraid. It was more the kind of afraid when something totally new happens, and you're not very sure what's happening, and you're not very sure what's going to happen. You don't want to run away, but you're still afraid in a different kind of way. That was the kind of afraid that my dad and his friends felt. But then, of course, the angel began to speak. He's a messenger, so he had to say something. And the angel said something, and he said something very important, and it's really right at the very heart of the story.

[8 : 35] The angel said this, he said, do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born, and he is Christ the Lord.

This was the message that the angel brought to my dad and the other shepherds that night. Good news. You know, my dad tells me that story time and time again, and he always says, isn't it amazing that we are just shepherds, and everybody thinks we are nobodies, but this was good news for us. We were the first ones to hear this good news. But then my dad always says, but by the way, son, remember that though it was very special that we heard it first, this was good news for all the people.

That's what the angel said. Good news for all the people, all the people in Bethlehem, all the people in Israel, and all the people in the whole wide world. This good news was for everybody.

But did you notice what the good news was? Well, the good news was that a baby had been born. Well, it's always good news when a baby's born. A baby had been born that very night in Bethlehem.

And though that is good news, it isn't that very special or strange that a baby would be born, because that happens quite a lot. What was very special about it was who the baby was. And of course, the message of the angel told us who the baby was. Really, the angel said three things about the baby. The angel said that this baby was a savior. A savior had been born. Now, what's a savior?

[10 : 26] Well, I wasn't very sure, but what dad tried to explain to me was that a savior is somebody who can save us from our sins, from the bad things we do. We all do bad things. I know I do. Sometimes when these older boys are teasing me, I remember one time I told them that last night my dad killed a lion, but he hadn't really. But I thought that would shut them up. You see, sometimes we say things that aren't true, or sometimes we're nasty to people, and a savior is somebody who can forgive us, who can save us from the bad things that we do. So, this baby who was born, he was the savior.

But the angel said something else. He said that the baby who was born was the Christ. Now, what does that mean? Well, the Christ is a special king that in the Bible, and God promised long, long ago, he said that a special king would come, even more special than David. David was a special king, but when he got old, he died like we all do. But this king, he would be king forever and ever and ever. The promised Messiah, the promised king. And the baby who was born was this promised king.

But the angel said something else about the baby. He said that the baby was the Lord. Now, that's the most amazing thing altogether, because, you know, that's a name that we give to God. God's the Lord. And the angel was saying that the baby was the Lord. Well, you know, I don't really understand that. That part is just very difficult to understand. But it was the angel who said it. So, it must be true, because the angel is a messenger from God. So, this was the very special news that the angel had brought, that a savior had been born in Bethlehem, Christ the Lord.

But that isn't all that the angel said. The angel said one more thing to my dad. He said this. He said, this will be a sign for you. The baby will be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. A sign. I wonder why my dad and the other shepherds needed a sign. It wasn't so that they could be sure that the message was true. Sometimes a sign is given to us. If we're not sure if something is true, well, there's a sign. And with a sign, we say, oh, well, it must be true. But that's not why God gave my dad and his friends a sign. They knew it was true. They knew that what the angel said was true. The sign was so that they would know which baby it was. You see, in Bethlehem, there are lots of babies. But the sign was that this baby would be different in some way. Not because he was born in a big house or in a palace, but he would be different because they would find him lying in a manger. Now, that's just crazy. Do you know what a manger is? A manger is where farmers and just ordinary people who have animals put food for the animals. Like maybe you have a pet dog and maybe you've got a plate where you put food for your pet dog. Well, you're not going to use that for anything else, are you? Well, a manger is somewhere where animals eat. And the angel said that this special baby would be lying in a manger. Well, if dad found a baby lying in a manger, well, he would know that this was the baby because there would only be one baby in all of Bethlehem lying in such a silly place. And so they went to Bethlehem and they found this baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger so they knew that this must be the baby. But I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself because even though this was the final part of the message of the angel, it's not the end of the story because just then something very, very strange happened. Something very wonderful happened. Suddenly, from there just being one angel, suddenly there were thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of angels all in the sky over Bethlehem. I don't know how many. My dad couldn't start counting them. There were far too many and he was too much thinking about other things to be worrying about counting them. But there were just thousands, maybe millions, I don't know, but loads and loads and loads of angels. And they were all singing and they were all praising God and they were singing like this, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men upon whom his favor rests. This is what they were singing. Now, I wasn't very sure what that meant either, but dad said to me, said, well, it probably means lots of things, but the most important thing to remember, son, is that the angels, when they sang like that, they were saying that what was happening was all God's work. Glory to God in the highest. It's God who is doing this.

It's God who is sending somebody to be a savior. It's God who is coming to the world to be a savior, to be our savior. And the baby that's born, he's been sent by God and he's going to grow up and he's going to be our savior. And so the angels were saying, we have to praise God for this wonderful thing that he is doing. And so the angels sang and they sang and they sang. Well, I wonder what happened next. Well, what happened next was that my dad and his friends, they were looking up into the sky and the angels suddenly started to disappear and they were quiet for a few moments and then they looked at each other and suddenly one of them said, well, let's go to Bethlehem. Let's go and find the baby. And well, we all agreed. And then we said, well, what about the sheep? And we said, well, somebody's got to stay with the sheep and nobody wanted to stay. So he said, well, we'll just leave the sheep.

[16:33] It's such a special night. I'm sure nothing will happen to the sheep. So we all went to Bethlehem and we got to Bethlehem and we found the baby with his mom and dad, with Mary and Joseph. And he was lying in a manger just as the angel had said. And we told Mary and Joseph everything that we'd seen and everything that we'd heard. And then we left and well, my dad and his friends left. And as they were leaving that place in Bethlehem, they told everybody they met this good news, this good news of great joy of the baby that had been born in Bethlehem, who was a savior, who was Christ, who was the Lord. And they told everybody and everybody was amazed until finally my dad got home and he told me.

He told me the story and he's told me so many times. I told you at the beginning, I'm 10. So I'm a bit old for bedtime stories, but this one is so special that sometimes I say to my dad, dad, tell me again. Tell me the story about that night when the angels appeared and when you saw Jesus in the manger in Bethlehem and he tells me again. And you know something, and this is the last thing I want to say. My dad told me the story because it was such a special story. And I've told you the story because it's such a special story. But you know, now you can tell other people the story so that everybody will know. Because remember what the angel said, that this was good news of great joy for all the people, not just those of us here, but people outside, people who haven't heard the story.

So we have to carry on telling the story, just like I've told you the story. So I hope you do that. You tell the story to somebody else. This story, this good news of great joy, that a Savior has been born in the town of David, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Well, let's just bow our heads and let's just pray. Let's pray.