

## Outcasts (2): The Shepherd All Were Watching

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(Luke 2:8-20)

### I. Introduction

- A. When I was a kid, there was a huge maple tree in our backyard
  1. As far as I can tell, this maple tree was only good for three things
    - a. Good for climbing... and falling out of and breaking your arm
    - b. Good for getting those whirly-bird, helicopter seeds everywhere
    - c. Good for spreading surface roots out into places like sewer lines.
  2. Our bathtub would fill-up with stuff bathtubs ought not fill up with
    - a. Roto-Rooter guy came, did smelly job, and things back to normal
    - b. I remember thinking, *“That’s not job that I want when I grow up”*
    - c. I also remember being very grateful he was there to do dirty job
  3. We continue with our series “Outcasts.” We come to the shepherds
- B. Jews looked at shepherds a lot like I looked at the guy from Roto-Rooter
  1. Sheep were very important to Jews for several different reasons
    - a. Sheep were eaten for food, though they probably ate more goat  
*(They also had beef, but sheep and goats did better on the semi-arid land)*
    - b. They needed sheep for wool which made up a lot of their cloth
    - c. As Passover neared, they really needed a lot of sheep for sacrifice
      - 1) Josephus says that 256,000 sheep were sacrificed in one year
      - 2) The sheep industry was a booming business in was Israel
  2. The Jews needed sheep, but they really had little use for shepherds!
    - a. That longstanding prejudice that goes back to Joseph and Egypt
      - 1) Remember where the Jews settled in Egypt? Land of Goshen.
      - 2) Settled there because Egypt didn’t like shepherds (**Gen 46:33**)
    - b. People like wool and mutton, but nobody seems to like shepherds
      - 1) Shepherds were dirty, smelly gypsies who moved with sheep
      - 2) They weren’t just drifters but also grifters– had sticky-fingers
      - 3) They were so unreliable they couldn’t testify in Jewish court
      - 4) They weren’t just uncouth and unclean– they were also unholy
  3. Everyone needs sheep; no one likes shepherds. Outsiders. Outcasts.

## II. The Shepherds All Were Watching

- A. First century Israel was occupied territory owned-and-operated by Rome
  - 1. The Jews had always looked to time when God would send His Messiah
    - a. But Roman occupation had created a “*Messianic expectation*”
    - b. In the first century, the Jews really leaned into Messianic promise
      - 1) Gamaliel points to several failed Messianic movements ([Acts 5](#))
      - 2) Jesus warns followers that false Messiahs would arise ([Matt 24:5](#))
    - c. There was this heightened awareness that time Messiah was near
  - 2. Maybe not so much for the shepherds; they were just caring of sheep
    - a. Outcasts usually aren’t that invested in political or societal events
      - 1) Guy living off-the-grid in Wyoming cabin isn’t follow primary
      - 2) Homeless living under bridge likely didn’t follow impeachment
    - b. Shepherds didn’t worry about Rome; too busy taking care of sheep
    - c. They were hard men doing a hard job, often a very thankless job
- B. It is bit ironic they were the ones to first hear of Messiah ([Luke 2:8-12](#))
  - 1. We’ve heard this story so many times that it sounds almost normal
    - a. Of course, there is nothing normal about it... except their reaction!
      - 1) Unlike Mary, the shepherds have the decency to be terrified
      - 2) So the first message of the angel is for them not to be afraid
    - b. The real message is, “*I bring you good news of great joy*” Gospel!
      - 1) There is an awful lot to take in there, but there is no time.
      - 2) Before they have a chance, the heaven open ([Luke 2:13-14](#))
  - 2. What do these hard men going do? What they were told ([Lk 2:15-16](#))
    - a. They angels told them they would fins a baby in a manger– they go
    - b. We’re not told exactly HOW they found the right manger– they do
    - c. Also not told how pleased Mary/Joseph are when they just show up
      - 1) Years ago, Lynn was in hospital for 11 days after burst appendix
      - 2) Had plenty of visitors; Lynn had this look, “*Get rid of them now*”
      - 3) Did Mary have a look for the shepherds? (Little Drummer boy?)
  - 3. Shepherds start the story as outcasts; end as first witness of Messiah

### III. Conclusion

- A. This story reminds us that the gospel of Jesus is a story for nobodies
1. God announced the coming of His Messiah to outcast shepherds
    - a. High Priest slept through all this ruckus and did all the Pharisees
    - b. Peter, Andrew, James and John were around there somewhere too
  2. God could have announced the Messiah's birth to all kinds of people
    - a. Good news of great joy was shared Good with a bunch of nobodies
    - b. Those nobodies then shared message with everybody (**2:17-18, 20**)
    - c. Maybe God made a pretty good choice after all, don't you think?
      - 1) Story begins with "*the shepherds all were watching...*"
      - 2) But it ends "*Go tell it on the mountain Jesus Christ is born*"
- B. We live today in the most divided and divisive times that I can remember
1. Except for during the civil rights movement (but I was pretty young)
    - a. And anti-war protests during Vietnam (lot of good music music)
    - b. There was Nixon and Watergate. OK, we've always been divided
    - c. What is different is there's ZERO respect and tolerance for others
      - 1) Anyone with different view is dismissed as snowflake or losers
      - 2) New term "*rankism.*" When you demean one of lower rank  
(*Like when the loser valet makes is too slow fetching your Lamborghini...*)
  2. Gospel is God's good news for nobodies... and we're all nobodies
    - a. Christ's Kingdom begins with the truth that all are one (**Gal 3:28**)
    - b. If you want to be first, then you must make yourself last (**Mk 9:35**)
    - c. If you want to be great, you must be servant/slave of all (**Mt 20:26**)
    - d. Call to follow is filled with things that sound like losing (**Mt 5:5,39**)
    - e. Being perfect follower sounds like being perfect loser (**Mt 5:43-44**)
    - f. Ways to being forgiven by God is through forgiving other (**Col 3:13**)
- C. Maybe that's why the gospel story starts with a bunch of shepherds
1. They're the first to get to hear it; they're first who get to share it
  2. It started with a bunch of losers with nothing to offer but themselves
  3. And so it is with us today. All we can give God is our faithfulness.