

Hope Retold
Luke 2:8-20

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Pastor Doug Browne
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Luke 2:8-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Merry Christmas!

Here in the Church, we've seen and heard some amazing things.

We have heard that God loved the whole world so much that God came out of a perfect Heaven to the, shall we say, imperfect Earth, to be born, live, die, and be resurrected for imperfect people like us.

We have seen God's amazing grace in a baptism, when God puts God's seal on a person, marking them as Christ's own, forever. Even if a baby, or an adult, hasn't done anything to deserve it. That's what makes it grace.

We have heard of Jesus loving human beings so much that he forgave even his executioners.

We have felt God walking with us, even when we walk in the valley of the shadow of death.

I think that sometimes we get too used to all this. We start to take our amazing God for granted. So, let me point something out for you:

All those astounding things that God does?

God CHOOSES to do them. Nobody can MAKE God do anything, but God still loves the world enough to walk with us, even when we don't want to walk with God.

God still loves us, even when it seems like no one else does and even when we can't quite find it in us to love ourselves. It breaks God's heart to see us like that, but yes, God loves us.

God does extend amazing grace and forgiveness to us, not just the first time we mess up and come back, but again and again.

God does walk with us through tough times, up to and including the valley of the shadow of death. I do not say that lightly. I've been at four deathbeds this year, and truly I tell you, I could feel God's presence at each one.

God is wonderful!

And, all too often, we treat that like some kind of a secret. We don't talk about things like that, do we?

Like the shepherds, we can tell people of the amazing things we have heard and seen. We can tell them with our words, but it is more effective to show them with our lives.

We can tell people about God's grace, but it's more powerful if we show them, by showing them grace. Especially if they don't deserve it. That's what makes it grace.

We can tell people about God's love, but it's more powerful if we show them, by showing them love.

We can tell people about God's peace, but it's more powerful if we show them, by being at peace and by helping them to be at peace.

So, in this post-Christmas world, ...

Praise God!

Tell people what you have seen and heard!

Show people the kind of grace and love and peace that God has shown you.

Show them every day.

AMEN.