

## The Nativity

Who has a nativity set as part of their Christmas decorations?

What typically is included in the Nativity?

Luke 2:1-21 (ESV)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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. 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. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths 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, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" 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." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Ultimately, it was an unglamorous setting to change the world

God uses the unglamorous to do glamorous things

## The Stable

Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.” – C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*

## Joseph and Mary

### Baby Jesus

Matthew 1:23 (ESV)

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.

To be the perfect, final sacrifice He needed to live a full and perfect life

“It is only because He became like us that we can become like Him.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## The Shepherds

“They were the lowliest of the low, despised by the local gentry; men whose skin glistened with sweat, whose clothes gave off a stench of animals and the fields, those who lacked the most basic manners or education. They bore names nowhere recorded in the Bible, yet whatever their names may have been, they would grace the guest list of the most joyful moment in human history. They were not of high esteem on earth; however, on this night they were favored by heaven. Imagine the wonder of that evening for those humble field hands. One moment the skies were dark and their moods were perhaps darker. The next moment, their

lives would be changed forever, a visitation they would not soon forget nor cease to recount for the rest of their lives.” – David Jeremiah

The angel did not go to the king, to the temple, or leaders of the day he went to a group of shepherds

God has history of using the most unlikely of characters:

Joseph

David

“Prayer lets God do what He does best. Take a pebble and kill a Goliath. Take the common, make it spectacular! Pray and see what He can do.” – Max Lucado

The Disciples

“The first ministers were the twelve disciples. There is no evidence that Jesus chose them because they are brighter or nicer than other people. Their sole qualification seems to have been their initial willingness to rise to their feet when Jesus said, ‘Follow me.’” – Frederick Buechner

The Women At The Empty Tomb

Luke 24:10-12 (ESV)

Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

God wants to use you, the most unlikely of characters

The shepherd’s method to be used by God:

Hear The Word

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV)

...because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Romans 10:17 (ESV)

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The shepherds heard the words of the angels

Matthew 4:18-22 (ESV)

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Respond To The Word

The shepherd's response was belief in what the angels had told them

Our response is to the message of the Gospel

1 John 1:9 (ESV)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Follow The Word

The shepherds not only believed what they were told but they sought after it

Matthew 16:24 (ESV)

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

John 15:5-8 (ESV)

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

“When we come to Christ, we are no longer the most important person in the world to us; Christ is. Instead of living only for ourselves, we have a higher goal: to live for Jesus.” – Billy Graham

Tell Of The Word

The shepherds told everyone about what they had seen and heard

Luke 2:17 (ESV)

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

We are called to tell everyone what we have seen and heard

Acts 4:18-20 (ESV)

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

“The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.” – Hudson Taylor