

### **Media Notes**

There will be a video highlighting Zoe Ministry for Share the Light: Christmas Offering.

There are no graphics during the sermon.



### **Key Questions, Metadata and Outline**

#### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about the shepherds, their place in society and how God welcomes the outsider.

#### ***Why is this sermon important?***

This sermon is important because it reminds us to welcome the outsider.

#### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This sermon has been prepared with the help of the sermon "Shepherds Living in the Fields" preached at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection on December 18, 201. More information about this sermon can be found online at <http://j.mp/1uEqz9T>.

#### ***What are the next action steps?***

The next action steps are

#### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news is that Jesus birth brings a kingdom in which all are welcome, especially those on the outside.

### **Metadata**

1. Topic(s)
  1. Advent
2. Sermon Books of the Bible
  1. Luke
3. Series
  1. Seek
4. Speaker
  1. Andrew Conard
5. Tags
  1. Shepherds, insider, outsider, welcome, God, advent,

3rd Sunday of Advent  
Seek - The Outsider (Shepherds)  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/11EqmfQ>

December 14, 2014  
Luke 2:8-20  
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,472  
Video is not available online

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Closing Prayer

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## Luke 2:8-20, CEB

8 Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. 9 The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you— wonderful, joyous news for all people. 11 Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, 14 "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." 15 When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." 16 They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. 18 Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. 20 The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

## Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

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\*\*\* Start Sermon Timer \*\*\*

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## Series Review

Today we continue our journey toward Christmas. We are preparing for the coming of Jesus and taking a closer look at those who were involved in the very first Christmas. Those who were seeking Christ and those whom God sought out.

- In the first week, we considered the present and the story of God seeking Mary through the angel Gabriel.
- Last week we take a closer look at the humble - Mary and Joseph.
- This week, we will examine the outsiders - those shepherds who were the first to hear of the birth of Christ.

- The final Sunday of Advent we join the seeker as we hear the story of the magi who were looking for the Christ Child.
- Finally, on Candlelight Christmas Eve we will hear the story of the birth of Jesus and celebrate with Holy Communion and the lighting of candles.

## Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will:

- Learn something new or find new questions
- Hear something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

## Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## Outsider Stories

Have you ever felt on the outside? That you are in the wrong place at the wrong time? I want to tell you a couple stories that I have of being on the outside.

### Wrong bathroom

One of them, a very simple story, takes place in middle school. I was attending Pleasant Valley Middle School in northwest Wichita. There were long hallways and the bathrooms had doors that opened both ways and they were on opposite sides of the hallway. This was great – you could walk in one door and out the other – quick and efficient.

Until, after your second class go to see a friend whose locker is in a different part of the hallway and head to your third class down a different hallway. I walked right into the girls bathroom and didn't realize it right away.

I was inside the wrong place.

I made my way out pretty quickly.

### Spirit Day

Then in high school, you have Spirit Week. You know, dress up like a super-hero one day, decades the next day, whatever it is. This is great. It's fun to get dressed up and go to school. Unless, like someone I know, you get the week wrong.

Not just the day wrong, the week.  
So not only is it wearing a superhero costume on decades day – this is wearing a superhero costume when no one else is wearing a costume of any kind.  
One of these things is not like the other...  
Clearly on the outside.

## **Outside in Life**

Yet being on the outside is not always so light-hearted. Sometimes we are on the outside because of the job that we have, where we live in town or what we look like. Sometimes being on the outside has serious consequences.

### ***Transition***

The shepherds in the story today are on the outside. We are going to take a closer look at their life and what we might learn from them today.

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## **Shepherds**

The story of the shepherds is one of the more familiar stories from this season. We hear the story every year. We sing about them in Christmas carols. It can be easy to romanticize shepherds, but let's be realistic. In the first century, they were among the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder.

## **Egyptians and Jews**

The Egyptians considered shepherds dirty and unclean. They wouldn't really have anything to do with them. They needed their work, but Egyptians didn't really associate with shepherds.

Jews, however, were from a long line of shepherds. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David – they had all been shepherds. But shepherds were associated with people who were less educated, people who were generally in poverty.

By the second or third century, the Jewish rabbis forbade shepherds to even testify in trials. They considered them a little dishonest or actually, people just didn't like them. They liked the fact that they took care of the sheep, they didn't care much for the shepherds.

## **Hired Hands and Landowners**

You might own sheep, yet it was different if you were the one that was actually watching the sheep at night. If you were working the night shift as a shepherd, it meant that you were the youngest of your family or you were a hired hand.

Shepherds have no property on which to graze their sheep, so they take them to other people's property. I want you to imagine what you would feel like if you were the neighbors of these shepherds.

## **Sheep or Shepherds Coming to Visit**

Imagine that someone brings twelve sheep to graze in your yard and eat your flowers. How long would you tolerate it before you called someone about it? You might call the city, maybe animal control, to get someone out there to do something about those sheep. How would you feel about the shepherd? Probably a bit irritated with them.

They were also not the kind of people you invited over to your home or to the hospital to hold a newborn baby—at least not straight from work.

At work, they were arms deep in sheep.

They tended to have a sheep aroma about them.

People tended to not think very highly of them. They were clearly on the outside.

### ***Transition***

When God sought out the very first people to hear the good news of Jesus birth, they were the outsiders. When God invites people to come and see the newborn king, God went to the lowest of the low. God went to those who were made to feel small, like nobodies. God welcomes those on the outside.

This gives us a clue about the kind of king which Jesus would be.

It helps us see what kind of kingdom Jesus would rule.

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## **Jesus Welcomes Tax Collectors and Sinners**

You remember that years later when Jesus began his public ministry, he focused on those who were outside. Especially in the gospel according to Luke, we read of Jesus welcoming tax collectors and sinners – those that are on the outside.

The tax collectors were employed by the Roman government and often inflated the tolls which they collected to pad their own pockets. Sinners included people who had broken the moral laws and also those that did not maintain ritual purity as practiced by some of Jewish groups.

Jesus spends time with them and listens to them.

God welcomes the outsider.

## **Religious Leaders**

When Jesus acted this way, when he welcomed tax collectors and sinners, the upstanding folks of society didn't like it very much. The religious leaders and legal experts grumbled and complained about it. You, see they had made a decision about who was welcome and with whom Jesus should be spending his time. They made it clear that the tax collectors and sinners were not welcome.

Jesus spent time with those that others said were out. In practice and in teaching, Jesus made it clear that in the kingdom of God - all are welcome.

### **Transition**

When I think about the shepherds and those that are on the outside, I think of the kind of people in society who are not always valued – really good, hard-working people, but who are sometimes made to feel small, insignificant, nobody really wants much to do with them – outsiders

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## **Outsiders Today**

### **#BlackLivesMatter**

Over the past months, there have been protest across the country with one of the themes being who's in and who's out.

People of color feeling on the outside and unwelcome.

Law enforcement feeling on the outside and unwelcome.

### **Outside in El Dorado**

There are outsiders right here in El Dorado. It can be easy to make assumptions about who is in or who is out, who is welcome or unwelcome.

I know what the people are like who live in that part of town.

I would not want to hang out with someone who does that for a living.

They don't even have a job or a place to stay...

### **In the Office This Week**

I confess that I don't always get this right. One day this week, I was in the office and getting ready to head home for the day. When a man walks in looking for help. He has a bike and he is on his way from Florida to Utah. He was looking for a place to stay for the night.

As we were sitting in my office and he was telling his story the thought that was going through my head was, "I don't have time for this. I don't really want you to be here right now."

The I caught myself.

This is a child of God.

I'm getting ready to preach this Sunday about insiders and outsiders and here I am without a few minutes to listen.

---

## **Conclusion**

One of the lessons from the shepherds for me and for us is that God chooses and uses the outsider. This is Luke's theme in telling the Christmas story.

Mary was from a town where the lowest of the low came from.

Joseph wasn't an arch-tecton, a master builder. He was a tecton, a handyman who worked with wood.

When Jesus was born, he was born in a stable and laid to sleep in a feeding trough for the animals.

## **Good News**

The good news is that Jesus birth brings a kingdom in which all are welcome, especially those on the outside. There are no preconditions. It doesn't matter what we have done in the past or who we understand ourselves to be. God welcomes the outsider.

## **Call to Action**

This is true for each one of us.

We believe that God welcomes all people.

God brings the outsider, in.

God offers love and grace to us before we are aware of it.

God is at work in the lives of people before they recognize it for themselves.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ in 10 days, I invite you to look for ways in which you might welcome those who are outside.

It might be:

- picking up one of the remaining stars from our Advent Giving Tree to help those that are in need.
- Showing up next Saturday at 3:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall to prepare to bless our neighbors on Christmas Eve
- Serving on Christmas Eve to help provide a warm welcome to everyone who will worship with us.
- Preparing for the Christmas Eve Offering

## **Invitation**

My invitation for you is to welcome those that are on the outside.

God welcomed the shepherds, outsiders, on that very first Christmas.

God welcomes the outsider – even you and me.

Will you pray with me?

## **Closing Prayer**

[Text here]

Amen.

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8:30 AM			11:00 AM		
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