

There were times when I am traveling and I sit down on a road trip far beyond before the sun rises and oftentimes on those we don't try to bother too much stuff at home don't want to spruik coffee there and so usually pick up a cup of cup of coffee and maybe a little breakfast on the road. And then when I stop by when I pull into the drive through. And I find that oftentimes the person that's working there very early in the morning probably has been there all night. They may have been there from the previous evening. It's a different thing to work over and through the night.

Other times as well as being in the middle of a night. One of her children is sick and needs some kind of medicine. Wal-Mart has open 24 hours a day. And I think it's a different life. Working in the middle of the night and.

Some some of you perhaps many people here in Eldorado work second shift or work third shift. And it's the people that work overnight. The people that are sometimes it seems that are last on the job. Drawing the last shift are those for whom.

Christ came first.

We hear in the stories of the shepherds that they were the ones that they heard about the Messiah the great reconciler who would come and make things right. The first ones to here were a bunch of shepherds guys that were working the graveyard shift in the middle of the night.

Got to one of them to know that the good news was for them.

Perhaps specifically for them so much so that God chose them to be the first ones to hear that news. The baby was born and wrapped in swaddling flows. And God didn't wait until the morning to begin to share that with other people. God sent angels to the shepherds that night in the middle of the night.

It's not that God made sure that all the kings of the great empires of the world heard about the birth of the other side first. No.

Not that God to the temple and that all the priests know who'd given their lives to be to God be the first to know of this greater rival. That's not what it says. The Bible tells us that the shepherds who were working at night.

And the glory of the Lord shone around them. I wonder I wonder if God has a grand announcement for us today. In Butler County in Eldorado. Who would be the first. To hear.

As we might imagine the shepherds were surprised when they were chosen to receive this message and notice in this text that the use of the word. You.

Bring good news to you is what the angels say. It's good news first to all people it is good news for all people. But first as I bring good news to you specifically you are the savior has been born to you. It happened in their town. It was right down the road and they were the first ones to hear about it. Surely they wonder why us.

Why me. Why did God choose this good news for me. And this seems to be a key ingredient in the people that God chooses.

They don't see it coming. They don't see themselves as the ones that God would want or choose. Jesus comes to the unsuspecting. You remember the story after of Zachariah and Elizabeth and later in the scriptures they were counting down the days till their retirement when they had the opportunity to hold this baby boy who would be come the Messiah. Mary you know was living her life in Nazareth she was engaged to be married a virgin. Plans to marry a man named Joseph and and from what we know of that it was nothing special about her. She was living a normal everyday life.

Certainly not expecting that an angel would come to her that night. And the shepherds were just at work on another night just any night on the job. Jesus

was sent to them and none of them saw it coming.

The first things that the players in the Christmas story thought of when they were told that Jesus was coming into our lives then was perhaps all the reasons why they shouldn't be the ones that were chosen that they should not be the ones to receive news like that. Zachariah said hey I'm an old man. Far be it from me to be the one to hold the Messiah.

Mary asked.

How can this be.

I'm a virgin we don't hear the shepherds response but as normal working folk surely they want to feel unqualified to receive and then share this message this message that had been expected and anticipated for hundreds of years. Jesus comes to the unqualified. You may have heard the line before perhaps that God doesn't call the equipt. But he quips those that are called. Now. Sometimes that gets us a bit too much perhaps and yet it rings true God doesn't call people who are already prepared for whatever it is that God has in mind.

God calls people that God is going to use to accomplish incredible and amazing things and then God gives them the gifts and the abilities what they need to be able to accomplish that God doesn't look at you first and say well you're good enough you're strong enough. By golly people like you and so I'm going that you're going to be the one that people choose. I'm going to choose no God chooses you.

And then gives you the gifts that you need to be able to do whatever it is that God might be calling you to you. Finally Jesus comes to the deserving.

The shepherds weren't chosen because they met certain criteria or they lived up to a standard these weren't the best shepherds in town. They weren't in the most successful. They drew the nightshift for goodness sakes. They didn't have a prestigious bloodline. They were not shepherds who won Bethlehem's Choice Award for the most popular in their field. Of course we look at them now and we revere them we revere them. Along with many others from the traditional Advent scriptures but when we look at their story when we consider what it was like for them they were undeserving and an qualified and unsuspecting to be recipients of this world changing news of the birth of Jesus.

We miss some of the power of the story of Christmas. If we neglect to see that the shepherds were unsuspecting unqualified and undeserving to be included and God picked them anyway. Jesus came. Not just for those shepherds of course but Jesus came for all people.

And nowhere in the scriptures is that as more clear as it is in this narrative that we see in Luke Chapter 2. The short passages the foundation for many of the things that we've come to associate with Christmas from nativity scene figurines on our mantel a home to children that dressing up like shepherds in the pageant to likenesses reading of this story in a Charlie Brown Christmas. We have Luke to thank for many things that have come to mean and feel like Christmas. And yet when we take a closer look at this reading of Luke's account we find that it's not designed to give a warm fuzzy feeling to folks thousands of years later during the holiday season.

LUKE wanted the world to know that Jesus was sent for all people everyone was included. The love that came down at Christmas was not limited for just a few. It was for everyone. And if Jesus was sent for all people.

Jesus was sent for you. Perhaps you can see yourself in this story.

And Lutu alone we glimpse some of the people that Jesus was sent for those whose expectations for their lives have changed. Those who find themselves physically uncomfortable those who drive crowded streets.

Those who feel that they live where they work. Those who are afraid. Even those that are terrified.

Those who need to hear some good news. Those that are in a hurry.

Those that are amazed by some things that are happening in their life and those who are pondering and processing some things that are going on around them or perhaps inside of them.

Jesus was said for people who felt and experienced the very same things that we do.

They were a people in need. They were a people that were desperate for help they were looking for something and maybe they didn't even know what it was that they were looking for. They were people just like us.

It's a fascinating thing that happens at this time of year actually. About a week ago you find that that many adults find themselves to all year long. You act like a grownup. You pay the bills. You show up to work. You're responsible sensible and maybe stressed out sometimes. If you're anything like me I find myself in all of these that you know the things that we do in our everyday lives. And then suddenly around the end of Thanksgiving something changes in US something awakens inside of us. We put up lights on our house we put animatronic deer in the yard. We get a life size snow globe of Santa and it's huge in the front lawn. We listen to music that we heard as kids we pile into the car and drive around the neighborhood to look at lights we put on ugly Christmas sweaters and we drink eggnog. We don't just give people gifts we wrap these gifts in fancy paper and we put them under the tree. Our hearts seemed to wake up to something new.

Something different something that reminds us again about what it is that we're looking for and by the time that we reach Christmas Eve we find ourselves looking and longing for hoping for something more.

Wherever our lives might have been up until this point in the year it seems that somehow there's a shift that occurs and it's hard to not notice that the decorations that are being put up in the tree. Good gracious there's a tree behind me here that wasn't here last year that wasn't here yesterday.

It's hard not to notice the things that are going on outside but part of what's also going on is some change that's happening inside.

There's something that we're longing for and that is different for each one of us. All throughout the year maybe it's something that. You're longing for the bills to be paid. Maybe you're aching for forgiveness maybe you ache for a child. Maybe you longed for some kind of job where you're going to find hope and stability. I don't know what it is that you're hoping for.

That you've been hoping for throughout the year perhaps or maybe for many years. But when we come to this season it's a reminder that part of what we're longing for every one of us no matter our circumstances.

We're longing for what Jesus brings Jesus was sent to the shepherds he was sent to people just like us.

Circumstances in which we find ourselves terrified afraid uncertain about what the future may hold and Jesus comes. US.

Jesus comes again to us this year and over the weeks ahead we find that this story about the birth of Jesus is not just about a baby.

It's about a young unmarried couple and rich Kings it's about an old couple who thought that their dreams were over as about shepherds working the third shift. And when we finally get to Christmas Eve will turn off all the lights. And will hold the candles and we'll sing. Silent night holy night All is calm. And all.

Is bright. And it seems that. No matter who we are we're all hoping. And longing. For hope. For Joy. For peace for love.

And that longing is deep.

The good news is that God's sins Jesus to us to make love real.

To offer hope to bring peace into our lives and to share joy.

And that God sends us out into the world. To share with others what God has shared with us so in these weeks ahead I invite you to pay attention to what it is that you're longing for. We

prepared a guide for you to help over the days ahead. Out here in the welcome center there's the Advent devotional guide. There's a short Scripture a prayer. There's a color and Page a chance to color and reflect share online is wildy of ways that we're going to invite you to engage in the days ahead. Be intentional about your time of preparation not just the physical things that surround us. But the preparation that happens in our hearts and our souls.

As we anticipate. As we've long for.

As we trust that God comes to us again this Christmas we pray with God we give thanks for sending your son Jesus to us we ask that you open our hearts and our minds in the days ahead. To prepare for the coming of your son again we ask that you guide and direct us strictness by your love. And help us to share with others. The love that you've shared with us we offer ourselves to you in Jesus name.