

Luke 2:1-20

Hurry!

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you think Christmas is always a busy and rushed time of year, then you're in good company with the shepherds on that first Christmas night. These shepherds were out with the flock, keeping guard over it at night. This is probably a normally quite uneventful time.

But then it starts. 'Suddenly' an angel of the Lord appeared. The pace picks up with the appearance of the first angel. It's sudden. Something is happening, and there's no time to muck around. And what the angel says also has a sense of hurriedness to it. "To you is born this day..." This is not a warning that something is coming soon, so that you can get ready for it. "This day", right now, the Messiah is born.

And then, we get another 'suddenly'. Suddenly this one angel with an urgent message is joined by a vast host of others. This thing that's happening right now is important enough that just one angel doesn't give it the urgency that it needs. And it's an event that brings glory to God and peace on earth.

And things don't slow down when the angels return to heaven. "Let's go", say the shepherds. No mention of what to do about the sheep in their care. "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened." And, of course, they didn't just start wandering in the direction of Bethlehem, No, they hurried to the village. They hurried to find Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger.

And once they found him, things didn't slow down straight away. No, they went told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said. This event was so important that they couldn't wait to tell others.

The change from the mundane and monotonous guarding of the flock, to the angelic announcement and visitation is really quite remarkable. Even the other parts of the story don't initially inspire much excitement. A census is not most people's idea of an exciting time. Having no guest room to stay in when visiting your hometown is not the best way to start your visit.

But then an angelic encounter lights up the night sky and literally changes the world. The message that caused such haste was amazing. The Messiah had been born. The one promised generations before is here. He is the saviour. And he is the Lord. These are descriptions of God. The prophets Isaiah and Hosea speak of the Lord God almighty as our 'Saviour'. The Psalms repeatedly refer to God as 'the Lord'.

And now these attributes are given to the child in the manger. By God's own decree, announced by his messengers in the dramatic encounter with the shepherds, everything that God himself is, is now concentrated in a single newborn child, whose only power at moment is to cry.

Mary and Joseph make no claims of their child. They don't have much to say at all here in Luke's nativity account. Indeed, the shepherds tell them why this is such a momentous occasion, and Mary then ponders all these things in her heart.

We have to take note of how quickly the shepherds were driven to action. A visit from a host of angels would probably give you kickstart, but the message proclaimed was also of great importance. We would do well to take their example on in our lives. They received by faith the message God sent them, and they responded with immediate obedience. And after seeing the truth of what they were told, they go and proclaim this good news to others. And they glorified and praised God for what he had done. They took on the role of angels in telling others the good news of what had happened. I wonder how many they told would also hasten to proclaim this good news to others

This is what should drive our urgency. But I suspect there are many other things that call on our time this Christmas season. We might feel as busy and rushed as the shepherds did on that first Christmas night, but is it really a fair comparison? Are we finding ourselves busy with living out the gospel message? Or busy with so much else that we don't even have time to hear the gospel message for ourselves? I hope and pray it is the former. Especially this most special time of year as we celebrate the birth of our saviour. He is the Messiah, the Lord. He is our Messiah, sent to redeem us from our sin. He is our Lord, who watches over us every day of our life.

This is absolutely something worth praising and glorifying God for. This is absolutely something that should cause us to hurry to hear and hurry to share. It is good news of great joy, and it is for you. Today in the city of David a saviour has been born for you. A saviour who will redeem you from sin and death and the power of the devil. A saviour who will usher in an everlasting kingdom of peace. This is our great celebration today. And it is worthy of an infinite host of angels breaking into our everyday lives to call us to immediately join in the everlasting song of praise to God.

"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." Amen.

May God's peace, which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.