

## Weekly Bible Study Schedule

**Tuesday, May 5, 7:00 AM in HHR #5**

(breakfast provided)

**Tuesday, May 5, 8:30 PM in Office #225**

(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

## INTRODUCTION

We continue with our “Christmas in July” message. Unusual to teach from the traditional Christmas story in May, however, it begs the question: what’s a new way to look at and apply life principles found in the narrative. For many, we are familiar with the story, potentially, desensitizing us from it’s teaching in our personal challenges and the daily grind.

### What’s Your Perspective?

**1:8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.**

What are you watching over? This night, the Lord is watching over shepherds, ordinary men, working hard each day and night. One might extrapolate from the text shepherds had a routine to their work. Perhaps, their responsibilities became rote. If they had a mantra might it be: “same ole’ same ole.” What’s the cadence of your life? What rhythm moves you? Shepherds had somewhat of a static job. It’s unlikely they had career advancement on their scorecard. Economic ambition wasn’t a part of their sunset. In addition, shepherds weren’t the most respected group of people. Worst of all, sweat, dirt, and odors, separated them from temple worship.

*The New York Times wrote that 70% of Americans are not happy with their jobs. Forbes.com says 70% of Americans hate their jobs. Gallup survey showed that 71% of workers are “not engaged” or “actively disengaged.”*

I’m not saying shepherds hated their job or wanted better perks in the way we understand perks. I am saying the realities of their world were the common, ordinary, and routine. The caution is if we are not aware we might miss our opportunity when it comes knocking at our door.

**1:9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified...**

And suddenly, they had a different reality. Just like that, “suddenly” broke into routine like dawn breaks into darkness. And, just like that, “suddenly” might break into your daily grind. Even more importantly, a “suddenly” of the Lord might land on your helipad.

Mind you, it had been 500 years since anyone had seen an angel, until Zechariah and Mary, and now ordinary shepherds. Their lives would never be the same again. They meet the angel of the Lord, surrounded by the brightest and most majestic light known to humankind. Light appeared in their night.

The coming of Jesus into earth introduces new perspectives in life. The shepherds become aware of the unseen world. That was reality: touch it, feel it, see it. But suddenly, the unseen world became visible and the God who was silent spoke to them through the words of mighty angels.

**1:10-13 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...**

Whether you feel like you need a savior or not, humankind did, and does need a savior. Into the world comes the Christ, the Messiah, the deliverer from our sins.

Lost people need to be found. Often, when a person tells me in private about mistakes they’ve made and sins they’ve committed one thing I say is: “that’s why Jesus came. If we never sinned we wouldn’t need Jesus.”

*The God-setting-things-right that we read about has become Jesus-setting-things-right for us. And not only for us, but for everyone who believes in him. For there is no difference between us and*

*them in this. Since we've compiled this long and sorry record as sinners (both us and them) and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us, God did it for us. Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we're in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ. (Romans 3:21-24 MSG)*

The **shepherds have a new perspective** at the intersection of light and darkness, on the street of hope, at the avenue of salvation, and at the corner of everyday grind and divine destiny.

After seeing the babe, Lord Jesus, *"...the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20, ESV).*

A stanza from Led Zeppelins' 1971 hit song "A Stairway to Heaven" says:

*"If there's a bustle in your hedgerow, don't be alarmed now, It's just a spring clean for the May queen. Yes, there are two paths you can go by, but in the long run there's still time to change the road you're on. And it makes me wonder."*

The angel of the Lord's appearance, the angelic songs, the bright light, the birth of the Christ, the shepherds return to their field praising and glorifying God is reason to pause and wonder, "Am I on the right path?"

God, the Father, sent Jesus so none of us need to wonder any longer, the stairway to heaven was born and His gift of salvation is free.

**1:14-19 "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.**

God takes the shepherds out of their world into His world and brings them a new reality. **What are the realities governing your life?**

**1:21-24 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. And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."**

- **At the end of eight days, when he was circumcised**

Circumcision was a requirement for all males. It was an outward sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

*"On the eighth day, her son must be circumcised" (Leviticus 12:3).*

They did what God asked them to do. Are you doing what God has asked you to do?

- **He was called Jesus**

*"These are the names of the men Moses sent to scout out the land. Moses gave Hoshea (Salvation) son of Nun a new name—Joshua (God-Saves)" (Numbers 13:6).*

The Hebrew name for God, Yahweh, and the name, Hoshea were put together to mean God's salvation. The Old Testament tells us it was Joshua that led God's people into the Promised Land. The angels announced, God's salvation is through Jesus who is going to lead God's people to a spiritual, not physical, promised land.

- **Time came for their purification**

Mary was purified on the fortieth day, as Leviticus 12:1-8 instructed.

- **Offer a sacrifice**

Exodus 13:2-12 instructed God's people to offer a sacrifice to consecrate their son. In God's economy he leveled the playing field for the poor. Their sacrifice could be pigeons vs. a lamb.

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What if our perspective would be that of Mary and Joseph, one of absolute obedience to God? Might this be the week to take spiritual inventory of what's in our hearts toward God as to the governance of our lives?

**1:25-32** Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

In his book: *"The Moral Bucket List"* David Brooks said: *"It occurred to me that there were two sets of virtues, the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral — whether you were kind, brave, honest or faithful. Were you capable of deep love?"*

*We all know that the eulogy virtues are more important than the résumé ones. But our culture and our educational systems spend more time teaching the skills and strategies you need for career success than the qualities you need to radiate that sort of inner light. Many of us are clearer on how to build an external career than on how to build inner character."*

Are there qualities in your life or my life, qualities which bring a stress upon righteousness and integrity, upon being devout, being a person of expectancy and hope, being Spirit-dominated and God-submitted and Christ-centered? Those are the qualities Simeon had.

**1:33-35** And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

People of all time, all places and all hearts will get to vote. Some will vote Him into their lives, and some will vote Him out of their lives. But note, even when He is voted out of one's heart, He is not defeated. He remains leader and Lord.

**I hope you choose to vote for Jesus today.**