

The Shepherds  
Luke 2:8-20 (ESV)  
By Margaret Nichols

It all began with noticing that the sheep in a one-piece nativity scene from Colombia appear to be singing. With their little mouths open, the sheep look as though they are singing. Why? And what is their song? Isn't it that they are rejoicing because the genuine article – the true Lamb of God – has arrived! Very soon the temple sacrifices of lambs and sheep would be over. Their lives would be spared! All these thoughts in my imagination got me thinking more about the shepherds.

1. Why the appearance by angels to the shepherds? Why not to another group of people?
  - a. They were representatives of the very poor and despised peoples for whom the Savior came.
  - b. The appearance to them emphasized the humility of Christ's condescension in His incarnation.
  - c. And then, why not the shepherds since they were the ones who cared for the sheep used in temple sacrifices for atonement of sin? Wasn't it appropriate that the announcement of the arrival of the Lamb of God be made to shepherds, even though they probably didn't know or understand this truth at the time?
2. v. 8 – The shepherds were faithfully and unsuspectingly doing their duty – “keeping watch over their flock by night” – their daily, ordinary routine.
3. v. 9 – The angel was sent to **them** and God's glory shone around **them** – specific; definite appointment (angel appeared physically, visibly only to Zechariah, Mary and the shepherds with special announcements – but to Joseph only in dreams with instructions)
4. vv. 10-12 – The message was for **them** – “I bring **you** good news (for all the people). For unto **you** is born...this will be a sign for **you**...”
5. v. 12 – The sign was very appropriate for shepherds and accessible to them to check out (a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger). The shepherds would be comfortable looking for a manger and would be welcomed in such an environment. This was their sphere of work and existence.
6. vv. 15-16 – They immediately checked out the message of the angels – “they went with haste and found” everything as the angels told them.
7. vv. 17-18 – The shepherds “made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child [that He is “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”] And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. – God chose shepherds, known as thieves and liars (the low-rung group of people in Jewish society) to be the first human proclaimers of the good news! 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, “...God chose what is foolish...weak...low and despised in the world...” Choosing shepherds to proclaim His birth was totally consistent with God's way of doing things.