

We continue our Advent sermon series, **Home for the Holidays**, as we delve deeper into Dr. Baucom's sermon *I'll Be Homeless for Christmas*.

1. Have you ever been camping or slept under the stars for an extended time? Do you remember what it felt like, smelled like, and what it was like after you went home?
2. Shepherds lived in the fields where they kept their sheep. In our day, where might this be, and what would it be like? Would it be a farm, the edge of town, somebody living in their car, or a camper? Imagine you're living in that situation – how would it feel? Would it bother you? Cause you to be hesitant, uncertain, fearful, or would you be fairly unconcerned?
3. **Read and reflect on Luke 2:8-20.** Sit and reflect with this rich passage for about 10 minutes. Imagine that you are a shepherd, fulfilling your daily responsibilities; tending the sheep for the evening. Breathe deeply and see if you can imagine the smell of shepherding on the hillside. Picture yourself with the sheep.
 - List all you know about how shepherds care for their sheep in the evenings -- "*keeping watch over their flock*."
 - Where do you understand shepherds fit in the culture of Israel during this time?

Re-read verses 9-14. In the quiet of the night, an angel appears before the shepherds.

- The angel again began, "**Do not be afraid.**" We have seen this before as the opening statement from Gabriel. Why might the shepherds have been "*terribly frightened*"?
- How is the statement the angel made to the shepherds similar to what was said to Mary and Joseph? (**Luke 1:28-33; Matthew 1:20-23**)
- How did their message affect Mary?
- How *WOWed* do you think the shepherds were with their experience?

Re-read verses 15-16. How do you think the conversation went between the shepherds after the angels left?

- What might have compelled the shepherds to leave in a hurry toward Bethlehem?
 - How might you have responded?
 - How hard do you think they had to search to find Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus?
4. Verse 20 reads that the shepherds went back "*... glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.*"
 - How might the lives of these shepherds have changed?
 - How might you glorify God this advent? With whom can you share the good news?
 5. Read the following Scripture passages and glean all you can about the life and role of a shepherd.
 - **Psalm 23**
 - **John 10:1-18**
 - **1 Peter 5:1-4**
 - **Isaiah 40:11**
 - **Zechariah 11:16**
 6. Why might it have been appropriate that God's design was for shepherds to be the first to hear the gospel? Read:
 - **Genesis 13:1, 5**
 - **Genesis 30:24-43**
 - **Exodus 3:1**
 - **1 Samuel 16:11-13; 17:34-35**
 7. Do you think the shepherds may have had a different perspective of their importance and place in the kingdom after their experience in Bethlehem?
 8. How might they now feel more at home in the kingdom of God?

As we continue to move through Advent together this year, keep your eyes and hearts open for those who may not have a spiritual home in which they can experience Christmas -- perhaps invite them to join you at Columbia.