



## **Good News for a Lowly People (Luke 2:8-22)**

**Caleb Collins**

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### **Introduction – Underdressed for the Occasion**

Anyone who has lived long enough knows the pain and social blunder of overdressing or underdressing for an event.

We've all been there before, whether it be visiting a church for the first time, going to an office Christmas party, walking into a meeting with one of your clients for a proposal, or going on a first date.

It's awkward and embarrassing because we can take it as a personal statement regarding our lack of self-awareness.

“How did I not see this coming. EVERYONE is dressed casually. I can't believe I didn't put two and two together.”

For guys, it's easy enough to fix this problem. Lose the tie, take off the jacket.

But what's worse than overdressing for an event is to underdress. I can't knit a tie in my car before that important presentation with my client. I can't fabricate a suit for a dinner party or a tuxedo for a Symphony performance. What you have on is what you're stuck with.

And when you step into those spaces, the reason why we can recall these events is because of the embarrassment and shame we might feel, being that guy wearing a polo shirt to prom.

How you are dressed to the party gives a visual representation of how you feel on the inside. Less significant, small, and out of place.

What we're looking at this morning is a story of a couple of guys who are underdressed for a very large announcement, yet we find that the glorious message of Christmas is divinely intended for misfits, underdressed persons in need of the grace of God.

Not underdressed physically but spiritually. That what is displayed physically in this story points to the need humanity has had since the Fall of Man.



Since Genesis 3, Mankind has always been underdressed before our Creator.

Mankind's problem is that because of our sin, we are spiritually underdressed for right-standing before God.

### Transition to Congregation

Maybe you're here this morning, and though you're not physically underdressed, you feel out of place being in church this morning.

You would describe yourself as several things but not a Christian.

For some, this is your first time to church or your first time to church in a while

There is no doubt in my mind that this morning, in our midst, we have persons who are overwhelmingly aware of their shortcomings before God, that feel out of place in church and maybe the pursuit of religion altogether.

That's what is happening this morning for some persons, but not for me. I've done too much, and I have no means to meet the "dress code" of what KingWay and Jesus Christ are offering.

### Transition to Prop and Outline

But here is the hope for all of us, dead in our sins and underdressed before God. The hope this morning is the message of Christmas, it's the good news that the angels delivered to these lowly shepherds.

The good news of Christmas is this:

***Salvation is made possible through the coming of Christ, and this gospel is offered to those who do not deserve it.***

The way that we are going to see that from this passage is in four short points:

1. The Audience of this Message
2. The Messengers of this Message
3. The Contents of this Message
4. The Proper Response to this Message

## 1. The Audience of this Message

Let's start with the audience of this angelic message of Christ's birth:

In Matthew's Gospel, we see that the wise men are told of the birth of Jesus Christ.

We know that an angel appeared to Mary and Joseph.

but in Luke ch.2:8-9, we see that it is a message delivered to shepherds in a field working at night.

I want you to remove all the Christmas story nostalgia and assumptions that we bring to this story and think about it:

Shepherds were not looked down upon during this time, but they weren't exactly viewed as equal to heads of state.

These men, like good shepherds, would be similar to farmers; they smelled like sheep, they needed a bath, and they were blue-collar workers working in a field trying to provide for their families.

Not only were they shepherds, but they were also working at night...

**So, if you were the Lord God and you were going to announce to the world the good news of salvation, that the Messiah has come, how would you announce it?**

Well, you would want to communicate it (1) in a way that it reached the most people and (2) through a medium that made it authoritative.

So, if we were going to announce it today, maybe you would try to get a Super Bowl halftime show slot or announce it at a Taylor Swift concert; that way, you would reach a large audience.

But the problem is that those are not authoritative mediums (maybe Swift); they're just a means to reach a lot of people.

So maybe you would want to do it at the State of the Union here in the United States, where there's more pomp and circumstance, where some of the most powerful people in our country would be able to listen to a long-form speech.



We would need to make sure to announce it during the peak hour for the media. Make sure that everybody is awake within the time zones that you want to communicate this message.

When I was in sales making 100 calls a day, we were told that Tuesday afternoons around 2:00 PM were the best time to make phone calls to prospective clients. That time was the most likely time for someone to pick up the phone.

So if the announcement of Jesus is, in fact, the good news of the Messiah coming to save his people, wouldn't it make sense that this news would be at the Jerusalem temple, or at the heart and capital of the Roman Empire?

Rather than God announcing this to millions of people, to religious leaders, to heads of state, *he announces it to shepherds.*

Rather than God announcing this in Rome, or downtown Jerusalem, *God announces it in a field filled with sheep.*

Rather than God announcing it at lunchtime when the markets are bustling with people or on the weekend when everyone's out, *he announces it at night.*

As **J.C. Ryle** puts it,

*"To shepherds—not to priests and rulers,—to shepherds—not to scribes and Pharisees, an angel appeared, proclaiming, 'unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'"*

**J.C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on Luke**

Why is this the case? What is Luke telling us about this good news and who it's for?

### Application

The shepherds represented the regular, everyday person.

The significance of these details is that the wonder of the Christmas message is a message that is not overdressed for any audience, no matter how spiritually underdressed you may be.

Simply put: the Christmas message is for anyone who has ears to hear. Your sin, regardless of the havoc it has done in your life and to your soul, regardless of how dark the night is, your sin does not disqualify you from the same good news this angel proclaimed to these shepherds that night.

**Your need for a savior makes you the intended audience of the Christmas message. X2**

So now, having looked at the shepherds and seeing each and every one of us as the intended audience of this message, let us look to the messenger of this message and the manner in which God communicated this news...

## 2. The Messenger of this Message

You remember how I said that it is important to pick a medium that communicates the authority to which the message is being delivered?

You wouldn't want to communicate a serious message on Saturday Night Live; you would want that message to be said in the Wall Street Journal or, again, the State of the Union.

How was this message communicated? (Try to remove the Christmas nostalgia) It was communicated by an angel!

From this point on in Luke's Gospel, angels only appear one more time: the tomb of Jesus Christ.

Angels aren't just paper boys; they are heralds of important announcements. In the Old Testament, they came at important times to announce really important things.

So, when an Angel shows up, it's no small thing.

An angel appears to Mary and to Joseph but think about how angels appeared to Abraham and to Joshua..., and here they appear to no-name shepherds.

Furthermore, these shepherds not only get one Angel, but they also get a multitude. These guys get a message and a song from a multitude of angels.

So, we have an authoritative message from God to God's intended audience: the everyday, spiritually needy man.

My friends, this morning, this authoritative message from God of good news is delivered to you through God's divinely inspired word.

The message of salvation is not just for the person on your left or your right; *this message is for you this morning, **and it is good news if you would have ears to hear it.***

So let us now look to point 3, the content of this message.

### 3. The Content of this Message

Look with me at **v.10-11**. When the angels appeared to the shepherds, the shepherds were fearful, and it's important to understand why they're fearful.

This is a supernatural event; the text describes the glory of God shining around them. These men were fearful for their lives because they were being addressed by God as spiritually needy creatures.

Deep down in our consciences, we all know that we stand condemned before God. Yet look what this Angel says to these men: *fear not*.

The Christmas message is intended for spiritually needy and broken people; (1) it is delivered inerrantly from the mouth of God, and (2) its content is good news of exceeding joy (3) for all people.

But what is the substance of this good news? Look with me at **v.11**,

*"11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*

**The reason why we do not need to fear but rather be filled with exceeding joy is that a Savior, who is the promised Messiah AND the LORD God, is born.**

The salvation that we desperately need from our sin is provided for in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The sin of mankind requires *man* to pay the debt, but given that we have offended God, it requires a *God-sized* payment.

That's a tall order, but it is a just order. We sinned against God, and because of our sin and our choice in the Garden of Eden to usurp the authority of God, sin entered the world.

For God to be just, God must do *just* things. God would be less than perfect if he turned a blind eye to our shortcomings.

Look with me at **v.14**,

<sup>14</sup> ***“Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth **peace** among those with whom he is pleased!”***

This is the meaning of Christ's coming: *God gets the glory, and we get peace with God.*

But how can God receive glory, *and* we get peace? Given the state of our souls, how can God receive glory where we are still standing, nevertheless in good standing?

Because Jesus came to die for sin so that we might have eternal life: peace with God.

Christ was born so that he might die.

Jerry Bridges says it like this,

*“God treated Christ as we deserved to be treated, so that He might treat us as Christ deserved to be treated.”*

**Jerry Bridges, The Gospel for Real Life**

**Christ's birth started the clock for his death. He was born to die and die so that (1) God receives glory (2) through the salvation of sinners.**

The second person of the Trinity took on flesh, born as a baby boy born in Bethlehem, to do these two things through his substitutionary work on the cross:

- (1) He would die to reveal the glories of God's character, his promises to his people, his mighty hand.
- (2) He would die to display the love of God for his people, the path of peace for all people who would believe.

### **GLORY and PEACE**

Friend, if you sit condemned of your sin. Fear not; there is a way of salvation.

Let us now look to “The Proper Response to this Message”

## 4. The Proper Response to this Message

So the shepherds were in the field. This Angel appeared. He delivered this wonderful message, and then a multitude of angels appeared, and they sang a song summarizing the meaning of the Christmas message. What happens next?

They respond first by going in haste to Jesus. What this looked like I have no idea. Did they bring the sheep with them, did they go to this overbooked inn that just denied Mary and Joseph and then the front desk had to deal with these 500 sheep?

The shepherds heard the message, and they responded.

I think the first point of application for us this morning is that the Christmas message demands a response.

There's no "oh that's so nice I love the Christmas message and I'll go on living my life forgetting God once I walk out of this building."

It's not a neutral thing to hear the gospel and to do nothing with it until next Christmas.

Not doing anything is a response and that response does not lead to peace.

**The response of neglecting the call of the gospel is to fear**, it is to tremble because you stand before God bearing the full weight of your sin and the full weight of his perfections.

Look with me at the last part of verse 15,

"which the Lord has made known to us."

The shepherds describe the message of salvation and the reason for their proper response as being from the Lord. It is a grace of God to hear the message of salvation and respond to it.

If you feel prodded in your heart to respond this morning to the good news of salvation, I have good news: that is God at work in your heart.

**What is the proper response to the Christmas story?** ...To a divinely inspired and authoritative message delivered to you this morning of the good news of salvation from sin and salvation to God in the person of Jesus Christ?

The answer to that question is found in **vs.18-20**,



<sup>18</sup> And all who heard it **wondered** at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary **treasured** up all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> And the shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising** God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

*The proper response to the revelation of God of Jesus Christ is to be beholden to it, to treasure it, to value it.*

**For those who have grown cold in faith**, the message of Jesus should be like dried firewood to hot coals: It should ignite a love of God and worship for what he has done for you in Jesus Christ.

**For those who do not submit to God**, for those who do not live under the rule of God, who have not turned from their sins and placed faith in Jesus Christ, for those who have not responded to the Christmas message: your proper response is to turn from your sins in place faith in Jesus Christ.

The fear that your sin rightfully creates speaks to a future completely removed from the grace of God.

The story of Christmas and of this message the angels gave the shepherds, yes, it speaks to the requirement of God, but it also speaks of God's perfect provision in Jesus Christ of all that he requires.

The greatest gift of Christmas is right standing before God. Greater than your family being together, greater than the money you have in the bank, **greater than being loved on earth is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.**

## Conclusion

- A. This overdressed Christmas message did not match the audience that it was proclaimed to, but it also did not match the appearance of our Savior.

Our Messiah, the Lord of the universe, took on the form of man, came as a babe wrapped in cloth, placed in a Manger, and slept outside of an inn.

Underdressed for the state he deserved. But for the glory set before him, *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

God in Christ identified with his people so that they may be dressed in his righteousness.



B. And this joyous message of salvation is for all who would have ears to hear, for every person in this room.

We're all shepherds; we are all underdressed for this glorious message of salvation. Where I hope you hear me this morning when I say that you are the exact audience God has in mind.

Christ died for sinners. And let me go one step further, *he died for sinners because sinners cannot save themselves.*

*You have no hope of saving yourself. There is nothing you can do to make yourself more lovely before God. There is no way to that you pass go and collect \$200 on your own. You need a savior.*

**Christ must be your salvation, or you have none at all.**

Humble yourself: see your need, see God's rich provision in Christ, repent of your sins, and trust King Jesus with your life.

***Salvation is made possible through the coming of Christ, and this gospel is offered to those who do not deserve it.***

As you wake up tomorrow and see your Christmas tree dressed with gifts and your tables dressed with food, remember that Christ took on flesh so that you might have peace with God.

Glory to God!