



Shepards Song

Promise of Hope | 12.21.25

Libin Abraham

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Libin Abraham 0:00

Usually in our life, maybe you've already had it, maybe you were headed towards one. I think we all have a once in a lifetime kind of encounter that changes the course of our life. It may be a person you meet or an experience you've had that changes the direction of your life. And sometimes those encounters come unexpected. You didn't expect it, and then it is there, and it changes the trajectory of your life. In 2009 I was finishing up undergrad and figuring out what to do with the rest of my life and the next steps, and wanting to do seminary, but not sure what to do or where to go. I was debating between Boston or California, visiting doing a seminary there, but I didn't know anybody there. But in the summer of 2009 a small, little Church in Houston, Texas invited me to come and teach their VBS to a group of kids. They asked, Could you come and teach Romans in a week? This ought to be interesting, but I came. They were kind enough to invite me, and I came and taught at the VBS. The young man who picked me up at the airport told me on the way to church, it's like, hey, you know, there's a Fuller Seminary in Houston. There's a great seminary fuller campus in Houston. I'm thinking, I did not know that. And then I'm thinking, this is a win win situation. One, I need to do seminary. And two, I had a crush on Stacy, and she lived in College Station, and Houston was a lot closer than Boston or California. I'm thinking, this could be it. I hear the Lord saying, come to Houston. So applied, got a few scholarships. I made seminary doable, and then I landed six months later in Houston, Texas, started Seminary in 2010 so that one conversation coming from the airport really impacted the next 11 years of my life in Houston. It led me to the churches I would serve in the relationships I would have. But the greatest of all I married. My beautiful wife stays. Thank the Lord Amen. I am grateful for that encounter of a lifetime in Luke chapter two, the shepherds also have an encounter of a lifetime. They were out there with their flock at night, thinking this was just going to be another, another ordinary, seemingly mundane night, nothing out of the ordinary than the other previous nights. But lo and behold, they had an encounter of a lifetime. An angel came to announce to them the good news that the Savior of the world had been born for them. And then a host of angels, a multitude of angels, filled up the night sky, worshiping, singing Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth among those whom he favors. What an encounter. It amazes me every year that of all the groups of people that God could have delivered the news to, he could have gone to the court of Caesar, he could have gone to Jerusalem. He could have gone to the temple. Of all the groups of people he chose to shepherd, how did not all by themselves to deliver the news of the arrival of the Son of God. There are a few reasons why I think he shows the shepherds. Because one, it was prophetic in nature. It was prophetic because Jesus would say about himself, I am the good help me shepherd. I am the good shepherd. But not only is Jesus our good shepherd, Jesus is the better and ultimate fulfillment of every shepherd we see in the Old Testament. Back in Genesis, you meet Abel, one of the first shepherds who died at the hands of his brother, who was envious and self righteous. Well, Jesus will be crucified on a cross at the hands of sinners, particularly, partly because of the envy and self righteousness of the religious leaders of his day. Then you meet Abraham, a shepherd who heard the voice of God and obeyed God's voice and left his earthly home to a place he did not know where he would end up, but Jesus left his heavenly home in accordance to the Father's will. You meet Isaac, another shepherd, but when Isaac was just a little boy, he would climb the mountain with his dad, Abraham, and Isaac would willingly lay down on an altar to be a sacrifice for God. But God said, Abraham, I provide it another way, because Isaac was simply a foreshadow of Jesus, who, as an adult, would willingly give up his life all the way for us. You meet Moses, who began as a prince in Egypt, but then for 40 years in Midian, he was a shepherd. But as a shepherd, he meets God of the burning bush and is sent to Egypt to be the deliverer of God's people. Jesus, the ultimate Shepherd, is our deliverer. From sin and spiritual slavery and from death itself. And He guides us through the wanderings of the wilderness until we arrive at the promised land. David, a shepherd, a young king, but a conquering king who would conquer Goliath and win so many victories on behalf of his people. Jesus, the ultimate David, the son of David, will conquer death, sin and the grave, and will lead us in a

triumphal procession. So could it just be that God told the angel find a group of shepherds, because I need them to know that the ultimate and Good Shepherd is coming. He has left his eternal home, he is coming to willingly lay down his life. He will be crucified in the hands of sinners, but death would not have the last word, because he would conquer death and would rise again to eternal life to give us life. Aren't you thankful for Jesus, our ultimate, great shepherd. Amen, this was prophetic about who Jesus would be. Not only was this prophetic, it was purposeful, purposeful because lambs were birthed and raised in Bethlehem and then taken to Jerusalem to be sacrificial animals at the temple. In fact, most scholars say that these shepherds were at night, watching their flock because it's almost the time of the Passover. And most likely, these shepherds are raising and helping grow sacrificial lambs to be then taken to Jerusalem they're caring for the very animals that will be offered as a sacrifice to God on Passover. The Bible says Jesus is the Lamb of God. Behold, John says the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And 30 something years later, Jesus would march through the streets of Jerusalem, born in Bethlehem, but to die on the outskirts of Jerusalem, he would go to a hill called Golgotha, and would be our final and ultimate sacrifice. And I just wonder if God, out of his gracious and kind heart, wanted this group of shepherds who had been faithfully in the heart, in the dirt, in the mundane raising and grazing and helping these sheep be ready for sacrifice. I wondered if God just wanted them to lay eyes on the ultimate lamb who would bring an end to the sacrificial system. God wanted them to be a part of the story for them to see the one who would bring an end to the very sacrificial system. It was prophetic. It was purposeful. But Third of all, it was personal to these shepherds. It was personal why shepherds had the reputation of being thieves and robbers in first century, if a shepherd came into town, people felt uneasy and they would walk the other way. The testimony of a shepherd held no weight in court. They were considered unreliable. You can't trust them. Shepherds were alienated from family and friends because they didn't just work out on the fields. They lived and spent their life out on the fields. They were even considered ceremonially unclean because all the stuff they had to touch. So the irony is, they're raising the animals to be offered for sacrifice, but they can never participate. They are the social outcasts. They are the outsiders, always on the outside, looking in, but never experiencing the benefit of grace. This is who the shepherds are. This is a deeply personal story to them. So I think God choosing the shepherds to receive the first announcement of Christ's coming was God making a clear point. It was God's way of saying that he wasn't coming just to rescue the mighty and the powerful. He was coming to save the lowly and the dirty. He was coming to rescue those who felt least deserving of God, who felt unqualified from the grace of God. And maybe you're here this Christmas, and you've sort of exempt yourself from the grace of God. You think, yeah, this story is great, this gospel sounds too good to be true. It's for everybody else but me. Maybe it's for the person sitting next to me. Maybe it's for that other guy I know who would be worthy of it. But friends, can I tell you there is no life too messy, no life too dirty, no life too unqualified or disqualified for our Jesus to reach and rescue. We have a god for whom this is good news for all people, amen, he came for every single one of us. In fact, in a way, I hate to tell you, we're kind of the shepherds. That's who we are.

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We have been outsiders, alienated from God. In fact, Paul one of the most intellectual, smartest guys to walk the earth. He would say this about the early church and the early believers in Jesus. Notice what Paul said in First Corinthians, one verse, 26 onwards, Paul says, Brothers and sisters, consider your calling. Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. And God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world, what is viewed as nothing, to bring to nothing, what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in His presence. It is from him that you are in Christ, Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us, our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption, in order that, as it is written, let the one who boasts boasts where boasts in the Lord. Apart from Jesus, we had nothing to show, apart from our weakness and our sins and all of us, we had nothing to contribute, and yet Grace showed up. Jesus came, we received the good news that God left the glories of eternity. Took him upon himself the impoverishment of humanity. He became our Savior. Why? So the only boast we have is in him. We boast in the Lord Christ, Jesus, and no one else. And if you're boasting in him, could you shout aloud? Amen, amen. Our boast is in him. We are the shepherds he came to rescue and save. Want to walk through a text in Luke two by looking at three things, what the shepherds saw, what the shepherds heard and what the shepherds did, what they saw, what they heard and what they did. Look with me at what they saw, what the shepherds saw. Luke two, verse eight, reads like this. In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. So you have this one singular angel appearing to a group of shepherds. It's like one on many, and yet, the many the shepherds are afraid. In fact, that's an appropriate response to pretty much anyone who sees an angel, because often the first response is, don't fear guys. It's okay. See, this tells us that angels are not like cute little flying beings hanging out on a cloud with a harp. No, no. The Scripture actually pictures an angel as a warrior, someone

to be terrified. And so the shepherds think man a warrior, the host of heaven is coming to punish us because we deserve it. He's coming to judge us because we can get that. But that's not what the angel came to do. He came to bring good news. So this one angel shows up in the middle of nowhere with an announcement of the coming of Jesus born in the city of David. And notice what happens, what they see next as a response to the announcement of the Savior being born, verse 13 says, suddenly there was a multitude. I mean, they could barely handle one. And now there is a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, with that one angel praising God and saying, we'll look at those words in a little bit. But now, in response to the one angel who has delivered the news of Christ being born in Bethlehem, a whole bunch of angels come. So they call all their friends a multitude of angels. And that's not 100 angels or 1000 angels, multitude, literally in the Scripture, means a number you cannot count, myriads of angels, angels you can't count shows up. And I have a feeling just about every single angel in heaven showed up. Every angel showed up to worship God at the news that Christ had been born. Why? Because the angels have been waiting for this moment. They were there in the garden when God gave the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, but they didn't know how and when all this would take place. They, as Peter says, have been longing to see the plan of salvation. They've been leaning into Earth to discover what God would do so when Christ is born, every angel. Angel pushes beneath the surface between heaven and earth, that thin space, and they burst forth into worship, because the baby in Bethlehem is their Creator, their Lord. I think this is fascinating, because the angels have a vantage point that nobody else in the Christmas story has. You think about it. Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth Simeon, Anna, the shepherds, the wise men, their first impression of Jesus is as a baby, like their first encounter of Jesus is in the flesh as a helpless child, but not for the angels, their first impression of the second person of the Trinity is not as a baby. They've been with him for all eternity past. They've been crying out holy, holy. Holy is the Lord God Almighty. They've been flying around like Cherubims, just worshiping and praising Him day in and day out. They know how glorious he is. They know how powerful he is so before we met him as meek and mild, they had seen him as holy and glorious. Before we met Him as the Son of Man, they had seen Him as the Son of God clothed in splendor. That's why this news is so radical, even more for them than might be for us, because they know who Jesus has been for all eternity. They can't help but enter the scene as they see their Creator laid in a feeding trough in a manger. They can't help but worship and sing and praise God with all of their being. This is what the shepherds saw. An uncountable number, multitude of angels filling up the sky with praise to God. That's what they saw. And what did they hear? What did the shepherds hear? Look down at verse 10. Again, the angel said to them, don't be afraid. Look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people Today in the city of David, a Savior was born for you. Who is the Messiah, the Lord? This will be a sign for you. You'll find a baby, a baby thinking, did we hear that? Right? Yep, a baby, a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger. The angels good news is not behold. I proclaim to you, you got three commandments instead of 10. I know you can keep the 10. So here's three. They didn't proclaim good advice. They proclaim good news. They also didn't proclaim good news for some their words were good news of great joy for all people, whether you feel like you deserve it or not, whether you feel worthy or not, whether you feel like an outsider or insider, whether you are far off, as Paul says, or near this is equally good news for all People. Why? Because God was not just sending another prophet or another priest to show the way, because the shepherds knew that wouldn't be helpful. God was sending a Savior who was God himself. Notice in verse 11, three titles that the angels used to describe Jesus, they say he is Savior. He is Messiah, and he is the Lord, Savior, Messiah and Lord, each of these titles for Jesus meets the need of the human heart. Think about it, Savior. We needed saving. We needed rescue. We could not save ourselves. We couldn't be good enough, religious enough, try hard enough. We needed a Savior. The shepherds needed a rescuer. And this is what Jesus came to do to bring salvation. He is the Messiah, which means he's the long awaited King, the promised Christ. So the promise is searching from Abraham to David, to all the prophets. He is the one that has been prophesied about Jesus being the Messiah. Tells our heart, God doesn't forget his word. He does not forget his promise. You can count him to be faithful to the promises he has made. He is the one we have been waiting for. And lastly, he is Lord. He is the one who has all authority in heaven, on earth, under earth, above the heavens, Wherever you look, he is the one with all authority. Caesar Augustus, in first century, claimed to be Lord, but that was fake news. It was a face false Lord, and the angels saying, here's the real Lord, here's the real king. He's a baby. The real Lord wasn't born into a throne in Rome, but into a manger in Bethlehem.

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So the angels messaged what they heard. And. The shepherds heard from the angels is look for you, your Savior has come, the one that you have been waiting for your whole existence. He is here, and this one has all authority and power to take the outsider and make him the Insider. This is the good news of the gospel, straight from the angels. And it is to this great news that the multitude of angels respond in verse 13, suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly hosts with the angel praising God and saying, and here's their song, Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth to people. He favors.

Glory to God, peace on Earth. Their first admonition, the first refrain of their song, is that God deserves all glory. God deserves all worship and praise, only he is worthy of our devotion and glory. You think of the highest heaven. You can't even perceive in your mind that's how much glory God is worthy of. Christmas is an invitation for us to consider, have we divided and shared the glory that is due unto God? Have we given worship, devotion, allegiance to anything or anyone else only God is worthy of our worship. You can't worship Jesus and a political leader or party. You can't worship Jesus and your favorite sports teams. You can't worship Jesus and your job or your title or your career or even your spouse or family members. There is only one worthy of Jesus and his name is he's worthy of worship. His name is Jesus. Glory to God in the highest heaven. I wonder. Do you need to redirect your full worship to this baby born in Bethlehem? The second part of their song is peace on earth to whom he favors. When glory ascends to God, peace descends to earth. So much of the lack of peace today is because we have separated what the angels kept together. When God is glorified, we experience peace. Rome claimed that they were the Empire who would bring peace? Caesar Augustus claimed that he would be the one to bring peace the Roman or the Pax Romana, or the Roman peace, was a campaign to try and bring peace. Every Emperor promised to bring peace at every turn, but every turn, people were disappointed, because wars continued, hunger prevailed, sickness was rampant, death went unanswered. But here the angel says there is real peace coming, and that is coming because God has come, the Prince of Peace, born in the city of David, Savior, Lord and Messiah, He is the only means of peace. Notice that phrase peace on earth to those whom he favors, to those whom he favors. Now that might lead you to wonder, okay, if only those that God favors gets peace, then how do we get the favor of God? And if we're not careful, that can lead you into a performance mentality. Okay, I gotta perform to earn the favor of God. I gotta do something. I gotta try harder to get into the good graces of God, so that I get his favor, so that he's pleased with me. What does it mean that God favors some and they're the ones who get peace? Actually, Luke helps us answer that in chapter 10, there is only one other instance, this word for favor or pleasing is used, and it's later in Luke 10, when Jesus sends the disciples, and they're seeing so many come into the kingdom, and they're rejoicing. And Jesus talks about, look, rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. Notice what Jesus does in Luke 10, verse 21 at that time he meaning Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and you reveal them to infants, Yes, father, because this was Your good pleasure. That word good pleasure, that's the same word in Luke two for favor or pleasing, Jesus is saying, Father, what pleases you, what brings you good pleasure, is to reveal the profound nature of salvation, not to the wise and powerful, but to infants. So the way you get into the grace of God and receive favor is to come to Him needy as infants. It's to come to him with the desperate realism. Salvation. I have nothing to bring. I am in desperate need of the mercy of God. I'm in desperate need of the Messiah, the Lord, to save me. I can contribute nothing to my salvation. I come as a desperate, helpless child, as an infant, and this is how you get favor, and this is how you get peace when you come to him as infants. For this is what the Father is pleased in. It's Alistair Begg who once said, When you get to heaven and you answer and you ask the question by the angels in heaven, or by the Lord Himself, why should I let you in? He said, You better not answer that question in the first person pronoun. Don't start with I. It's not because of what I've done, what I've made, what I've achieved or accomplished. The only way to answer that question is not with the first person pronoun, but with the third person pronoun, he, not I, but he, he saved me, he rescued me, he sought me out, he gave me grace. He had favor on me. It's all him. That's why we boast only in the Lord Jesus. Because we come as infants, we come needy to the Messiah, and there we get grace. Said this a few weeks ago. Most religions you got to get high enough or climb the ladder enough to get God, but this invitation is to get low enough, humble enough, be childlike, enough be infant like enough to receive the grace of God that saves so that's what the shepherds saw and what they heard. Now, notice what they did. Verse 15 says, When the angel When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. Let's go straight to Bethlehem in 2016 we were say she was pregnant with Avery and we're expecting her. She was supposed to be due in June, so about two weeks earlier, she decided to come out. So I still remember, it was a Friday night. I was actually packing my bags not to go to the hospital, but to go to the airport because I was going to do a wedding the next day in Chicago. Stacy looks at me and says, I think I'm having some contractions. Well, can I wait till like tomorrow? At 7pm when I get back, she says, buddy, that's not how it works. So I said, Okay, well, I'm gonna hop in the shower and you just tell me, if you think this is like real came out of the shower, and she said, Yeah, we better go. So we packed a different bag and headed to the hospital. Now it was late at night. It was raining like crazy. There were tree limbs falling everywhere. But as I pulled out of our neighborhood, I had this thought in my head. I was like, I haven't eaten like, dinner yet. So I wonder. I've heard that these things can take a little while. So, honey, there's a Burger King, like, right here. Can we just slip right in through the drive through, and just get something? And she was so kind, and she said, Okay, fine. Just hurry. And so I saw the line of people. I didn't actually go inside. Well, I did, but I waited like two minutes like, Okay, I better get to their to the hospital in time. We made it. We're good. But the shepherds did what I should have done, which was go straight to their destination.

Okay, so that's what the moral story is. They didn't stop to get dinner. They didn't stop to say hi to friends or anybody else. They went straight to Bethlehem. They could not wait to lay eyes if the Savior had come, if the Messiah was here, if the Lord was among them, they couldn't get there fast enough, and that's what some of you need to do this Christmas. Need to get to the feet of Jesus as quick as you can. You've been waiting, looking around, exploring other options. Go straight to him. Notice what 16 says. Verse 16, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. After seeing them, they reported the message. They were told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them, but Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. Verse 20, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and

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heard which were just as they had been told they returned, how glorifying and praising God I've actually entitled The message today, not. Angel song, but the shepherd's song. We expect the angels to sing. We expect them to praise and glorify God, but the shepherd's singing. The shepherds glorifying the shepherd's blessing. God is an outstanding miracle. In fact, what's remarkable about this is Luke uses the exact same phrase to describe how the angels worship and how the shepherds worshiping, same word to talk about how the angels glorified and praise God and how the shepherds glorify and praise God, that's mind blowing to me, because the shepherds are on the low rung of society. They're almost as low as you can go. Only lepers were considered lower than the shepherds just a few hours ago, they had no hope. They had no chance of being in the presence of God. Just a few hours ago, they felt forgotten, isolated and alienated. But now one encounter with Jesus, and they are singing the same song as the angels. One encounter with Jesus and the shepherds and the angels are equal in worship to God. They are speaking and praising God with the same tone of heart and gratitude. I don't know what song they sang or what words they used to praise God, but I imagine they probably were singing the last song they heard, which was Glory to God in the highest heaven. Glory to Him who saved us, glory to Him who pursued us, glory to one who was born for us and peace on earth. We came humble. We came lowly. We came forgotten as infants, but God remembered us. Oh, I just wonder if they were singing the same song as the angels. The shepherds returned. They had to get back to work, just like in a few days you got to get back to work. Or you got to go back to your town where you're from. Got to get back to the normal day to day rhythms. They went back to their flock, but they went different. They arrived changed. And what changed them wasn't just a once in a lifetime encounter with the angel. What changed them was their encounter with Jesus. And can I tell you, Jesus is actually not a once in a lifetime encounter. Jesus is the encounter that lasts for a lifetime. He is the encounter that lasts your whole life and beyond. He is the encounter that lasts for all eternity long. He's the encounter that gives you hope for this life and for the life ahead. He is the one who gives you life now and eternal perspective, power, Grace now and for all eternity long. So they laughed, glorifying and worshiping God. So my question is, shouldn't we be as excited as the shepherds were? Here's what I want to answer that with, we should not be as excited as the shepherds were. In fact, we should not be as excited as the angels were. We should be far more excited than the shepherds and than the angels, because on this side of the cross we have seen, we have read the accounts that the baby who was laid on a cradle, would crucify on a cross, and then he would rise from an empty grave. Amen, we have seen that this helpless child is A crucified Messiah and now a reigning king at his at his throne. Every elder lays down their crown. Every angel for all eternity, worships because he is King of kings, and he is Lord of all so for all eternity, he is far more worthy of our worship than we can ever imagine. Amen, I want to close by reading the words of the writer of Hebrews, who has an invitation to you and I, as we come to Jesus. The writer says like this in Hebrews 13, verse 12, therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that he must sanctify the people by his own blood. He is the sacrificial lamb. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing his disgrace, for we do not have an enduring city here. Instead, we seek the one to come. Therefore, let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise that is the fruit of lips that confess his name. This is our response for all of our life here and for all of our life in heaven, we continually offer up a sacrifice of praise. This is the only sacrifice God desires of us, praise, Thanksgiving and glory, peace. This is the fruit of our lips, not complaining, not hate, not bickering. The fruit of our lips is praise. It's worship to our Savior, to our Messiah, to our Lord. Left heaven, took on flesh, lowered himself to the point of the cross to defeat death, to give us life. And our response is praise. Let's pray. Father. There may be some in this room and online who have been looking for an encounter their whole life, hoping it would change them, but it's left them empty today, may they encounter Jesus, life itself, peace himself, hope himself. May it be an encounter that changes the rest of their life. Jesus, thank you for taking outsiders like the shepherds, outsiders like us, and adopting us into the family of God, changing us, forgiving us, transforming us, giving us life eternal. And we commit today by the power of your spirit that our response will be praise, that we get to join in the song of the angels and the worship of the saints and the fruit of our lips this Christmas season and for all the days of our life, it's worship and praise, because you deserve it only you are worthy. And I pray for some hearts today to surrender to Jesus, to give their heart, to give their life to Jesus, to

acknowledge and come to you as infants, not bringing anything else, but to come empty, saying, Jesus, I need you. I'm desperate for you. I need you to fill my heart, come into my life. I want to be saved. I want to be forgiven. May today be the day of salvation that changes the trajectory of someone's life. God, would you do it when you were glorified? The Earth experiences peace and for the weary in this room, for the brokenhearted, for the grieving, for those who are sorrowful having lost a loved one, dreams that have come collapsing down, hopes to feel shattered. We choose to continually give You glory, because, in a supernatural way, when we give you glory, we experience peace. We love you, Jesus, we thank you. Thank you for coming and being our Savior. In Christ's name, we pray, and the church said together, amen, amen. And can we give a clap offering of praise to the one who is worthy? Amen.