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Hope Lutheran Church

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“Flash Mobs, Shepherds, and The Baby Jesus”

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text for today’s sermon is from the Gospel reading of Luke chapter two about the shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night.

But first, I want to tell you about some stunned Christmas shoppers.

Several years ago, more than six hundred Philadelphia-area singers circulated among the Saturday morning shoppers in the large Macy's store in downtown Philadelphia.

Dressed in street clothes, the inconspicuous singers mingled with other shoppers.

Then, at noon, the organist at the mall's historic Wanamaker organ, the largest pipe organ in the world, began playing the opening measures to the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah.

Suddenly, the choir members, sprinkled throughout the store, started singing in full voice. The video for this event shows the amazed shoppers watching the choir giving glory to the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." [Youtube.com/watch?v=wp_RHnQ-jgU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wp_RHnQ-jgU)

There they were shopping or eating in the mall. Can you imagine the surprise? The unexpectedness? And then you smile and just enjoy listening to the organ and singers.

If you were at this mall on that day, you probably went with haste back to work or home for the day and told your co-workers or family what you had seen....about your flash-mob experience.

Well, 2000 years ago on a hillside field near the town of Bethlehem there were some shepherds who got “flash-mobbed” by a host of heavenly Angels.

There these shepherds were, after a long day’s work, sitting around the fire, finally relaxing. Then an angel appears with the shining glory of the Lord. Night-time must have become like day.

This must have been an awesome, fearful sight. And the shepherds were captivated by it.

Then the angel announces that “today” the Savior has come.

They are given directions to Bethlehem and signs of a babe in a manger. Then they are flash-mobbed by a host of heavenly angels praising God.

Can you imagine their surprise? The unexpectedness? But, what did the shepherds do next?

These shepherds had a lot of responsibility. They worked hard. They loved their sheep, and they took great care of their sheep. They were dedicated to their flock. It was noble work to them. I’m quite sure that after a day of shepherding these men were tired.

But after their angelic encounter, these shepherds say 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 verse 16 in the Gospel of Luke says that, “They went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.”

They dropped what they were doing. They left their flocks with others to watch. Not a small thing for a dedicated shepherd.

They were convinced of the priority that this child held in their lives. These shepherds went to see the babe who is the Good Shepherd, the perfect shepherd, the shepherd who will shepherd the way a shepherd is supposed to shepherd.

And they didn't stop at worshipping the Christ child. After their flash mob encounter with the angels, after their encounter with the Christ Child, they made known what had been told them, the heavenly message concerning this child. They shared the good news with others.

What would we have done if we were one of these shepherds? Would we have responded as they did even though we were tired?

Would we have gone with haste to where the angels had directed? Would we have told others about what we saw? Would we have been as excited?

What about today? Do we still get excited? Do we make being in the presence of the Lord a priority? Do we share the good news with others? Do we glorify and praise God for all we have heard and seen concerning the Christ Child?

Do we need a heavenly intervention of angels?

Now you and I might get flash-mobbed at a mall someday, but chances are we will not be flash mobbed by a host of angels. But we don't have to be visited by angels or flash mobbed.

We know the whole story. We know that this child is Immanuel, God with us. And that he has saved us from our sins. We know that he came to earth through a virgin's womb. God incarnated. God entered our earthly existence in human flesh.

The angels tell the shepherds that they were bringing good news of great joy which shall be for all people.

The good news is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this good news is that Jesus came to pay for my sins and the sins of all people.

He came so that we can cast all our troubles and burdens on Him. We can cast all our doubts on Him. We can cast all our guilt on Him. We can cast all our grief on Him.

And because Jesus came, he now lives in our hearts. And because He lives in our hearts, we are strengthened by Him.

We are never alone. We can share His love come down from heaven with others like the shepherds did.

And when we fail, when we fall, and we all do. Jesus showers us with His blessed assurance that we are forgiven and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Yes, we know the whole story. But these shepherds did not. And yet, they made it a priority to be in the presence of the Lord.

This Advent you and me, and our families have the opportunity to be in the presence of the Lord. We have the opportunity to worship at Advent Services and on Sundays.

We have the opportunity to be in the presence of the Lord every day and worship Him with our lives...

We have an opportunity to study the Scriptures and see how God promised a Savior, sent a Savior, and promises that the Savior will come again.

Parents, you have an opportunity through all the Christmas Traditions that your family has, to make the focus of this season, Jesus....to pass the faith onto your children. Maybe a reading of Luke Chapter Two could be read on Christmas morning before the festivities begin.

Youth at Hope, you have the opportunity to renew and refresh your trust in Jesus.... To realize that whatever is going on in your lives that Jesus is right there by your side and He loves you.

Long time and new Christians alike, you have the opportunity to open your hearts and look with awe and wonder on the birth of our Savior and the eternal beauty of this gift.

A father once told a story of how this gift of Jesus is right here in the middle of our lives.

This father had brought up the Christmas decorations from the basement, but other obligations kept him from starting to decorate. His young daughter began to play with the Nativity Set.

When the Father had returned home he found that his daughter had helped to set the dinner table with Nativity Characters at each table setting. He chuckled to himself thinking I guess we'll be having dinner with angels, shepherds, cows, and sheep this evening.

Then his daughter came running and was upset because the baby Jesus was missing from the set. After dinner and much searching, he finally found the baby Jesus in the bottom of his daughters backpack mixed in with all her other treasures.

He reflected on this MIA Jesus and then realized that... Jesus was not "missing in action" at all. There, in the midst of all the symbols of his daughter's interests and activities, was the Lord of life. And that reality extends beyond 5-year-old girls and backpacks.

This story reminds us that Jesus belongs in our minivans, computer bags, backpacks, cell phones, purses, gym bags, suitcases, and checkbooks.

Yes the Christ Child, God's uncontainable love for his creation spilled over into the shepherd's night, a cattle stall, a manger....and into our lives. The one who made us has come to us and remains with us in all that we are and all that we do.

May we all... be like the shepherds who went with haste and knew that being in the presence of the Christ-Child is a priority. May we be focused on the Christ-Child this Christmas.

May we be excited, may we share the good news story with others, and may we, like the shepherds, glorify and praise God for His most precious, saving gift to the world. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.