

Christmas Eve  
Luke 2:1-20  
Pr. Tom Schoenherr  
(Read Luke 2: 17-20)

Christmas is a story filled with wonder and amazement. God comes to live with us! God's love is made known to the whole world, to all people and also to you and me. Christmas is God's life joining with our lives, God's story connecting with our stories. Amazing!

I remember the day that our granddaughter, Kayla, was born on November 18. We were all waiting in the waiting room; grandparents, aunts and an uncle a phone call away; waiting like shepherds out in the fields. We did not expect Kayla to be born so soon, and we were praying for Lisa as she was delivering this child into the world, a child determined to be born. As our son, Neil was walking with the isolette that held Kayla, and came down the hallway toward the waiting room where the shepherds had gathered; it was like the announcement had come from the angel. We all ran out into the hallway to see Kayla, this child who would change our lives. After she was taken to Children's Hospital, we rushed to tell all those who would want to know that she was born, what we had heard and seen.

The shepherds in the Christmas story were common and ordinary people, no one special, and in that way I can relate to them. Their story is part of God's story, and also connects with your story and my story. The shepherds are in the fields watching their sheep. Waiting! They have no theological training, but they were doing God's work as shepherds. They were about to be amazed and terrified by the presence of God coming to them. The angels explode onto the scene.

First only one angel, a messenger of the Lord, and at the sight of one angel. the shepherds are terrified. I think I would be too. The angel says, "Do not be afraid- for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people; to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find the a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." Now all of a sudden there are many more angels, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. "Glory to God in the highest heaven." Amazing!

We live in a world where people want to be amazed. We can't seem to get enough. Every TV show needs to be more amazing than the last. We want more and more to be entertained. Each event, even worship services, need to be amazing in order to hold our attention. Our technology allows us to talk to people in all parts of the world, to see them on a screen while we are talking to them. We can text message, send and receive mail, play games and watch movies all on the same hand-held phone. What will be the next amazing thing? But have we lost the wonder and amazement at God's most amazing gift to us? Have we become bored with this story of God's love for us? If we become so focused on ourselves and what will keep us amazed and entertained we may turn away from God and the gift of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is the most amazing gift of all.

The shepherds lives were totally changed by this amazing experience. I would have been overwhelmed by just seeing the angels and them singing God's praise. It must have been glorious! But the angels go back to heaven and now the shepherds become the messengers like the angels had brought the message to them.

The shepherds do what the angels told them. They go quickly to Bethlehem because they so earnestly desire to see this child. And when they find Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus in the manger, they tell them and other people all they had been told by the angel about this child; that he is the Messiah, the Lord, the Savior, the Good News of great joy not only for them but for all people. Amazing!

We are today's shepherds. We hear the message who wait and pray in hospital waiting rooms.

Jesus Christ is born to live and die and rise again for you and for all people. Jesus Christ comes to forgive us, to bring healing and hope, and to hold us close because he is delighted with us. Like the shepherds we get to tell this amazing story through text messages, cards, E-mail, web cams and all the wonderful technology we have to be able to share this story that changes our lives. As we receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, hear the words, "The body and blood of Christ given for you." "Don't be afraid. Jesus Christ is the good news for you and for all people. We get to glorify and praise God for all we have heard and seen, sharing the message with ordinary people, shepherds in forgotten places like hospital waiting rooms, prisons, subways and buses, classrooms and offices. Amazing! Amen.