

## **CHRIST CAME FIRST FOR THE REJECTS OF SOCIETY – PART 1**

Luke 2:8-10 ... “Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.’”

Please do not be offended by the title which references “rejects of society.” That is not an insult, but a fact that in every culture around the world, from the beginning of time, there are segments of the population that do not enjoy the benefits and respect that others enjoy. It is not necessarily their fault; usually it is our fault that such groups exist. In Africa, such people might be slaves (even today). In the middle east it is women. In America it is the homeless. In many countries, it is the indigenous peoples of the land. In developed countries, it could be the poor or common laborers. In the time of Christ, the men who herded sheep and lived with their animals in the fields, were considered the lowliest of people. They were unclean by Jewish religious standards; ignorant, untrustworthy, and dirty. So, when we refer to them as “rejects of society,” we are indicating how the people of that day treated them.

According to the Gospel accounts, immediately after Jesus was born an angel appeared to shepherds to give them the good news. These men were probably not even aware that Jesus’ birth had been prophesied. Since they were ostracized from Jewish religious observances and training, they may not have had even a knowledge of God. An angel did not appear to the local priests or wealthy Jews. He did not wake up the editor of the Bethlehem Inquirer so she could write a headline story for the morning paper. The angel, including a multitude (probably thousands) of other angels singing praises to God in the desert, appeared only to the dirtiest, least respected, and most rejected citizens of the land, the shepherds. And the angels did not merely put on a show for the shepherds. The passage reads: “the glory of the Lord shone around them;” around the shepherds. They were engulfed in the majesty of God, something that must have been overwhelming for a group that was normally avoided by other people.

In verse 10 the angel told the frightened shepherds to not be afraid because he had good news for them. Shepherds of that time probably lived their entire lives without ever receiving good news. And in verse 11 the angel told them, “...born to YOU this day...” is a savior. God sent his son Jesus Christ, first to the lowliest people on earth. If you bless wealthy people, the blessing will likely not filter down to poor people; it may be hoarded and kept to themselves. If you bless poor people, there is a better chance that the blessing will spread to others because they are naturally more generous. Had God sent Jesus only to the rich and celebrities of society, we might never have heard about it. God knew to spread the word of Christ’s arrival through the lowest levels of society.

Our churches are often operated for the “better” people of our communities. People who can read and write, carry on a conversation, are dressed reasonably well, and have jobs that allow them to tithe. People who can enter our doors without being mocked or ridiculed for their appearance or their smell. People who can afford the transportation to get themselves to the church. But it is the people that we sometimes reject to whom Christ first appeared. It is just such people that the angel said, “born to YOU this day,” is a savior.

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