

**Redeemer Lutheran Church
San Antonio, Texas**

**January 21, 2024
Third Sunday In Epiphany
Congregation Christmas Program**

NOTES: Offerings will not be collected by passing plates. Please place your attendance cards and offering in the plates located by the narthex.

Masks are not required, but you can wear one at your own discretion. There is no specified seating for bible class or worship.

Prelude

Processional Theme Hymn: “Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us” – LSB # 711

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Hymn of Invitation: “Oh Come all Ye Faithful” – LSB # 379

The Gospel Story: Luke 2:1-20

¹ “At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. ³ Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own hometown.

⁴ Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David.

⁵ He went to register with Mary, who was promised in

marriage to him. She was pregnant,⁶ and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby.⁷ She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

⁸ There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks.⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid,¹⁰ but the angel said to them, “Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people.¹¹ This very day in David's town your Savior was born—Christ the Lord!¹² And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!”

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger.¹⁷ When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child.¹⁸ All who heard it were amazed at what the

shepherds said. ¹⁹ Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. ²⁰ The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.”

Now, let’s remember that night so long ago!

SHEPHERD: It's that night again. Every year I sit here on this rock and look up into that same sky. The stars are the same. (Points out the stars in the sky).

The Pole Star, and the Small Bear and the Big Bear opposite one another across the Pole Star. It is a clear and cool night again, a night for pulling you cloak up around your shoulders a night when important things can happen. It's all the same. Every year, the same. I come here. I sit. I watch. I remember.

Hymn: “It Came upon a Midnight Clear” – LSB # 366

We are watching our sheep then.

There were several of us here. Everyone guarding a small flock of sheep, sheep gathered inside the circle wall of rocks, shepherds at the gates. We talked to one another through the still night. A young shepherd boy complained.

"It's cold tonight."

"Yes, cold."

"I wish I were lying in a warm bed at home."

"Don't think about it, boy. Sing a song or something."

So he sang a silly song about a shepherd boy and a wealthy girl. I look over Bethlehem. The streets were dark. No one was moving about. It was very still and quiet, except for the boy's song.

Hymn: "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem" – LSB # 361, v. 1-2

Some people ask how I don't get lonely or bored. Sitting here looking at the stars is a good time to think. Shopkeepers and rulers are too busy to think but I have long, quiet times for thinking and wondering. I often think and wonder about that night when the angels filled the sky and broke the silence of the night. At first it was just one angel floating bright in the dark air above the hillside. I thought I was dreaming, but the boy stopped singing his silly song and called out my name.

He was scared. I could tell he was scared by the way he called to me. My stomach was jumping too, but before I could say anything to the boy, the angel spoke.

"Don't be afraid. Something about the way he said it quieted my insides. And the boy calmed down, too. That's when I knew it was an angel.

Hymn: "Angels we Have Heard on High" – LSB # 368

"Behold," he said, "I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people, for you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

While he was saying this my head was filled with the sound of his voice, as if it was coming from inside me, as if there was nothing else to hear or see or know at all. Then the whole sky was full of angels, and they were all singing. It was a beautiful song, not like anything I'd ever heard. And that song was inside me, too!

"Glory to God in the highest," they sang, "and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." As quickly as they came they were gone, and the sky was empty, very empty, and the air was cold again.

"Did you see that?" The boy was running toward me. "Did you hear that? Angels! Angels in the sky!"

"Yes, boy I saw. I heard."

"Well, what should we do?"

"We should go and look for the baby, the Christ."

Hymn: "Away in a Manger" – LSB # 364

Some of us went to look for the baby in the manger, and some stayed to watch the sheep. We found the baby just as the angel had said, in a stable at the inn. He didn't look any different than other babies, but the angel said he was the Messiah. We told them, the mother and the father, about the angels. We sang a song of praise to God. Then we went back to our sheep. What else should do? We are just shepherds.

So now it is that night again. I sit here on this rock again. I look at the stars again. I think and I wonder, why us? Why did the angels come to shepherds?

Why not go to the king to tell the news of the Messiah's birth? Or maybe to the priest in Jerusalem? Why us?

Everyone is close by to an angel.

We were worthy? Who is worthy before the Almighty? We were looking for the Messiah? So? So were the Pharisees and the Zealots. Who wasn't looking for the Messiah?

We knew deep inside that we needed the Messiah? I don't know.

I sit. I think. I wonder. What will the Messiah do when he is grown? Will it all still be the same then? Same night? Same sky? Same troubles?

I wonder.

Enough wondering for this night. I have sheep to watch.

Congregation Prayers:

(**Pastor:** Lord, in your mercy,)

(**Congregation:** Hear our prayer.)

Message... The Great Shepherd and his work; The Lamb; the blood sacrifice, the purity; the eternal hope. FOR ME, FOR YOU, FOR ALL!

JESUS

Benediction Hymn: “Go Tell it on the Mountain” – LSB # 388

Sending Hymn: “Joy to the World” – LSB # 387

Announcements:

Postlude

Please take the bulletin home or discard it in the trash before you leave.

Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
2507 Fredericksburg Road, San Antonio, TX 78201
(210) 732-4112

Website:
<https://www.redeemersatx.com>

Pastor Mike Bailey
ret.texaspastor@gmail.com