

Christmas is always filled with a sense of wonder. We gather at this turning point of the year, when daylight is at its shortest and night comes early—churches radiant with the color of poinsettias and the warm glow of the Christmas tree—and we listen once again to a story we know by heart, yet never fully exhaust. This is the heart of the Christmas mystery: the birth of the divine Child in the depths of the night, in a forgotten corner of the world. Light appears in darkness. Glory breaks into obscurity. Hope enters a world that often feels heavy with fear.

St. Luke's gospel narrative of Christmas begins with the machinery of empire: Caesar Augustus, decrees, censuses, power exercised from afar. Joseph and Mary are caught up in forces they did not choose. They travel, displaced and vulnerable, and when the moment comes for Mary to give birth, there is no room for them. The Savior of the world enters human history not amid security and comfort, but amid uncertainty, inconvenience, and poverty. From the very beginning, Jesus chooses to stand where so many of us find ourselves—small, exposed, and unsure of what comes next.

Then St. Luke shifts the scene to the shepherds, keeping watch in the fields by night. And suddenly, heaven breaks open. The glory of the Lord shines around them—and their first response is fear. Not mild unease, but great fear. This is significant. Scripture is honest about what happens when unredeemed humanity encounters the holiness of God. Glory can frighten us. Light exposes what darkness has

hidden. The presence of God can unsettle us because it reveals both who God is and who we are not.

So the angel speaks the most repeated command in all of Scripture: “Do not be afraid.” Not because there is nothing to fear, but because God has acted. *“Behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”* Fear is not dismissed; it is transformed into joy.

What makes that transformation possible?

The angel does not point the shepherds to an army, a palace, or a throne. Instead, they receive a sign: *a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.* God’s answer to human fear is not domination but vulnerability. Not distance but closeness. Not power imposed from above but love offered from below.

That God entrusts this message to shepherds is no accident. Shepherding was among the lowest forms of work in the ancient world. Shepherds were distrusted, marginalized, and considered unreliable. And yet, throughout Scripture, God repeatedly chooses shepherds—Jacob, Moses, David. Once again, God entrusts the greatest announcement in history not to the powerful or respectable, but to the lowly. This is the pattern of Christmas: God goes first to those who think they do not matter, those whom the world tries to ignore.

If today you feel unworthy, forgotten, or unfit in the eyes of God, then this Gospel is already looking for you. If fear has

shaped your choices—fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of loss—then this good news is for you. The angels are not announcing judgment; they are announcing joy. And joy is not the absence of struggle. Joy is the presence of God where fear once ruled.

Jesus reveals to us who we are created to be—fully human, fully alive. Too often, our broken humanity settles for less. We make choices that promise security but deliver isolation. We cling to habits that feel safe but slowly drain our joy. Christmas proclaims something better. *“What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”* (Jn 1:3-5).

This is what the angels see. This is why they sing. *Glory to God in the highest—and on earth peace.* Not peace as the world gives, not the fragile peace of control or avoidance, but peace that flows from reconciliation with God. Peace that comes when fear no longer has the final word.

The shepherds respond by leaving everything behind and going to Bethlehem. Fear gives way to movement. Wonder awakens faith. They do not analyze; they go. And they find exactly what they were promised.

Today, Christ comes to us again. He comes quietly, humbly, offering not condemnation but communion. He knows poverty. He knows obscurity. He knows what it is to be born

into a world that has no room. Yet His glory still shines—and His desire is not to terrify us, but to draw us into joy.

The question before us this Christmas is simple, but decisive: Will we open our hearts to receive Him? Will we allow this newborn Child to transform our fear into joy, our darkness into light, our guarded lives into lives fully alive?

The angels have spoken. The Child has been born. The decision now rests with us.