

Service

Luke 1:26-33; 2:8-20; Matthew 1:20-23; 2:13, 19

Central Idea: The angels readily served God's purposes with excellence and efficiency, playing a vital role in the plan of God's salvation at Christmas.

Introduction

The glorious message of Christmas is that Jesus came to this earth and ministered to us, became our high priest, became our Savior, and demonstrated God's love to us. He did not come as some high and mighty Lord, but He came to our level and understands us and sympathizes with us. But this is not all to the meaning of Christmas.

Just as Christ came to us, we also go to others in the same kindness and name of Christ. Getting saved is just the beginning of our walk with God. There is much more to Jesus than being saved out of sin. There is also being saved into the Kingdom, and the service that we are more than willing to give to God. The angels that are part of the Christmas story teach us a lot about how to serve the Lord. Let's take a look at their example!

Text – Matthew 2:8-20

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" ¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

- I. God wants to use you in service for His plans!
 - A. God has multiple opportunities to serve Him.

- i. The angels were a rare breed of God's servants. They are celestial in nature, and the Bible gives descriptions of them in such contexts that we must imagine them to be noticeably not human.
- ii. The common reaction to an angelic visitation in Scripture is fear. Every once in a while, they are described as carrying a sword. Angels battle and they also send messages for God. They can bring a word or a deed from the Lord.
- iii. Throughout the whole Bible, there are rare occasions of desperation in which angels appear to serve God. They do not show up on a regular basis, and they do not appear to just anyone.
- iv. Angels serve multiple functions throughout the Bible, but mostly as messengers for God. In fact, the very word angel means messenger. They can speak for God, fight in battle, and worship God, to name a few of their functions.
- v. Out of all the facets of the angels, one thing is certain. They are true servants of God, doing His bidding whatever it might be. They are quite the workforce.
- vi. Their rare appearance throughout history is in stark contrast to their appearances in the narrative about Jesus' birth. This should give us a clue as to the importance of this event.
- vii. In the gospel accounts of Jesus' birth, angels show up either as individual angels or in a concert of host at least six times! This is all for just one event!
- viii. One could imagine Mary's and Joseph's utter surprise when the angels appeared to them. Angelic visitation was limited to Israelite leadership, such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon and the like. They also appeared to priests from time to time and even to prophets.
- ix. But for an angel to appear before a commoner, that was not only rare. It was unheard of. So we can understand when they took these meetings very, very seriously.
- x. You never knew if an angel came with good news or with bad news. This is another reason for the intrepidation on the part of the hearer. Suffice it to say, angels are used of God for His mighty purposes and serve Him completely.
- xi. **Application:** These servants of God in their excellence show us how to serve God. They are always willing to do whatever He wants. They always fulfill His will in their service. I hope that each of us this Christmas can serve God in ways the best glorify Him as well!

B. God speaks and acts through you in your service.

- i. In the same way that God can use angels because they are made to serve Him, service to God is also part of how we are wired as Christians. Christmas is not just about Jesus serving us, but also about us serving others.
- ii. **Illustration:** I am amazed sometimes at the things that I do or say that God can use to minister to someone. Sometimes, I am told, just being able to talk to me or be around me can minister to someone. I almost never realize what God is doing in my interactions with others unless they tell me. There are times, however, when I feel the presence of God in the midst of a conversation or of helping someone.
- iii. But for the most part, I am virtually unaware of what exactly God is using in me to minister to others. It is important for all of us to first realize that God wants to use us.
- iv. Many Christians don't think they are worthy enough to be used by God or that they don't have any useful gifts or talents or knowledge to impart, but that is not the testimony of Scripture.
- v. Even in our greatest weaknesses, God can use us. I would consider that angels who are used to visiting kings and priests and prophets would be surprised to show up on the doorstep of a commoner like Joseph or Mary or the shepherds in the fields.
- vi. And yet, they didn't question it. They just went and did what God wanted them to do. We need to have a confidence that God wants to use us, that each of us have been given some gift and some ministry by God.
- vii. This is the first step, to know that God wants to use us. The second step is to find out in what way He wants to use us. Sometimes taking stock of our lives helps us to see a way that God can use us.
- viii. Other times, you won't even know He's using you, but you will be used. There are times of divine appointments and moments where God has you at a specific time and place simply for ministry, and what you see as just being nice is God's last-ditch effort to reach someone.
- ix. **Application:** Even in the mundane tasks of life, never forget that God can use you in a moment's notice. Allow God to use you when you realize that He wants to use you. Ask Him for opportunities to serve Him. What would your life look like this Christmas if you actually asked God for assignments and were sensitive to His ministry through you?

II. God wants to enjoy your worshipful service!

A. Serving God causes joy and praise to erupt in us.

- i. The angels that bring the message to the shepherds come in the clouds in a mass group to tell of God's greatness through Jesus and His birth.

Originally there was only one angel appearing, and then there is this massive amount of them in the heavens!

- ii. The angels worship God because of His plans becoming a reality. They worship Him because they have watched history unfold, and finally the appointed time is here.
- iii. There's something about serving God that brings us into a greater and more poignant place of worship. When we can be a part of what God is doing, we understand much more how great He is.
- iv. Our involvement in God's plans and purposes makes us more open to the importance of what He does. And we are left in awe of a God who is always in control and always working good things, even from the bad things.
- v. These shepherds are doing the worst job in all of Israel. A shepherd had the lowest job of all. Tending sheep was an all-life process. They didn't clock in from 9-5. They spent every waking moment providing and protecting, and even some of the sleeping moments were ruined by dangers all around.
- vi. These shepherds are least in Israel because no one wanted their job. No one wants to tend sheep. Sheep are ornery. They are always getting lost or wandering off. Then there are very mundane and ordinary times where nothing is happening. Quite frankly, sheep can become boring.
- vii. Beyond that is the fact that this job was usually given to the youngest or the child that was in the parents' doghouse, or even the least favorite child. It was seen as extremely hard work, but as the Bible shows us, shepherding makes great leaders.
- viii. So these shepherds are in the nighttime putting the sheep down for the night, guarding them in their pens. It's most likely they had a corporate or shared sheep pen.
- ix. Then all of a sudden an angel is telling them first of what God is doing in the coming of the Messiah. And then, there is an entire host of them! This is incredible, and God used His celestial servants, the angels, to inform these servants of Israelite culture.
- x. **Application:** No ministry is too mundane or too boring. No one is too low to receive ministry. We should never have any ban on ministry to anyone. Everyone needs God, and everyone needs what you have to offer. No one deserves to be treated as though they don't need God's help. God chooses us to minister to others, but we must be open to ministering to them. Don't judge others who need God's ministry through you. God has a reason He is using you in their lives!

B. Serving God is contagious to those around us.

- i. The best part about this whole episode is that the angels are worshipping God in such a way with such fervor that it makes the shepherds very interested in what God is doing.
- ii. They are so impressed by the angelic message that they want to go and see Jesus as well. So they go to see Him in Bethlehem. They are among the first to meet the Messiah, despite their low place in society!
- iii. God then uses these servants in the field and in shepherding to serve His divine purpose of spreading the word about Jesus, the Messiah. They tell everyone they meet and everyone they know what God has done and what the angels have reported to them.
- iv. Through these servants, God extends the glorious message given by His angels in the fields. Service that is done with a worshipful attitude leads others to want to serve God as well.
- v. They see a genuine heart and a truth in our service and lifestyle. They want God because we have a passion for Him. There are not a ton of things in this world to have a passion for, so when something comes along, people get interested.
- vi. These shepherds demonstrate the principle that worshipful service to God is contagious and people who see worshippers serving Jesus begin to want to take part in something bigger than themselves.
- vii. In this way, more people can serve God. It is not about addition, but rather multiplication. The angels did not just add witnesses to the birth of Jesus. Their passion for God and their worshipful attitudes multiplied the witnesses through the shepherds.
- viii. God wants to use every single one of us to make a mark for His Kingdom, to influence the world. But we have to be willing. We have to seek opportunities to serve God and others. We have to do it in a passionate attitude of praise.
- ix. The angels teach us that if you serve God genuinely and passionately, others will want to get on board with the cause of Christ. Our excitement can become their excitement.
- x. **Application:** This Christmas, we need to get excited about the message and meaning of Christmas once again. That excitement is passed on to your children and to your family, to your friends and your co-workers. It's easy to take a day or two off of work and talk about Santa Claus, but it's just another holiday. What if Jesus was real to everyone around you purely through your passionate worship of Him at every turn?

Conclusion

God has used so many people in the past, and He wants to use each of us. We have a host of insecurities and a lot of reservations, but God wouldn't choose to use you if you weren't ready to do what He asks. Angels teach us to not let our reservations keep us from being an indispensable part of God's plans in this world. He calls us to serve. There is a joy in our service that causes us to more deeply appreciate what God is doing and who He is. This Christmas, make service one of your top priorities, and you will find that Christmas is so much more to you than a mere celebration.

Action Points

- What is your attitude toward God's call to service? Are you open to serving Him no matter what the job? Are you humble and obedient in your calling?
- God is always seeking to use us, even though we are unworthy. In what ways do you think you cannot be of service to God? What strengths do you think God wants to use you in?
- Our humble cry and heart's desire should be to give back to the Lord for all that He has done for us. It is a debt that cannot be repaid. It is not out of repaying that we serve, but out of our love for God!