

Keep it to yourself

The message of this short sketch is somewhat obvious. Luke 2:17-18 ends the story of the shepherds with the words *“When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”* Those who had encountered Jesus, were instinctively compelled to tell others about what they had seen and experienced, sending ripples of amazement throughout the community. As those who have encountered the living Christ, and come to celebrate his birth, there is an inevitable question as to whether we share the same enthusiasm to make known what we have seen and heard. The sketch would fit well in a nativity service at the point where the birth has been announced to the shepherds (perhaps after *“Hark the Herald Angels sing”*) and invites us to imagine what might have happened if they had chosen to do nothing.

Shepherd 1: Wow! That was something else!

Shepherd 2: There must have been hundreds of them,

Shepherd 3: Thousands I reckon.

Shepherd 1: And those harmonies; it was as though heaven itself had been set to music.

Shepherd 3: That’s what it was – (*gazing upwards with awe – as if announcing . . .*) the music of heaven

Shepherd 2: And . . the message of heaven – Glory to God in the highest; peace to all the earth

Shepherd 1: What an unbelievable privilege – of all the people on earth, God chose us to be the first ones to find out about the Messiah’s birth.

Shepherd 3: This is going to be a night that I’ll be telling my grandchildren about one day.

Shepherd 2: Yeah – this is our moment in history

(There is a brief pause as all three simply revel in the contentment of the moment)

Shepherd 1: Right – are we off then? (*as if making to leave*)

Shepherd 2: Off where?

Shepherd 1: Off to see the baby of course! (*still making as if to leave*)

Shepherd 3: What baby?

Shepherd 1: The baby the angels came to tell us about (*with some impatience*) – the “to you in David’s town this day is born of David’s line” baby they were all singing about. (*still convinced that the other two will follow*)

Shepherd 2: But they didn’t tell us we had to go and visit him.

Shepherd 1: Yes they did

Shepherd 3: Well technically they didn’t – they did say that we would find him wrapped in swaddling bands lying in a manger – but they didn’t actually tell us to go and see him.

Shepherd 2: If you ask me these sheep have had enough disturbance tonight without us three clearing off and leaving them to their own devices. It’s important that someone goes

to see the baby, but we've got responsibilities. We need to be practical about this - we've got sheep to look after, there's plenty of other people who can go and visit the baby.

Shepherd 3: Quite right – so let's settle down and get back to sleep – (*lying down and pulling a blanket around himself*) it's your watch if I 'm not mistaken – good of you to wake us up though, wouldn't have wanted to miss it for the world . . brilliant show.

Shepherd 2: Absolutely – it was amazing; (*settling down as well*) let us know if any more angels come won't you.

Shepherd 1: You're acting as if you don't believe them – they've told us that the Messiah has been born. (*the shepherd settles again for a longer conversation*)

Shepherd 2: Of course we believe them, why wouldn't we? They are angels after all.

Shepherd 3: And there was certainly enough of them, you're not going to argue with that lot – so let's have no more talk of doubting their word and let's get back to sleep.

Shepherd 1: But we can't just do nothing.

Shepherd 2: We are not doing nothing – like you said, we are affirming our belief in the truth that the Messiah has been born.

Shepherd 3: And renewed and encouraged by that truth, we can all get on with our lives.

Shepherd 2: Our nation has been waiting years for this moment, and we can be grateful that **we** know for sure that it has finally come

Shepherd 3: Amen!

Shepherd 1: But shouldn't we at least go and see him?

Shepherd 2: Feels a bit rude to be honest

Shepherd 1: What feels rude?

Shepherd 2: Checking up on the angels like that – I mean if they've come to tell us that a baby has been born, we should just take them at their word, not go snooping round making sure they've got it right – it wouldn't do to question the word of an angel.

Shepherd 3: Quite right – and besides, last thing a baby wants is a bunch of blokes turning up disturbing his little sleep.

Shepherd 2: Yeah, poor little fella's got enough to cope with having to kip in a manger.

Shepherd 1: Well shouldn't we at least tell someone. (*trying again to encourage the other two to their feet*)

Shepherd 2: Listen, let's not start causing bother for them

Shepherd 1: What do you mean bother?

Shepherd 2: If people start finding out that the Messiah's parents haven't even bought him a proper crib, there'll be a right to-do – you could have the press turning up, all kinds of officialdom . . . (*as if beginning to list off the possibilities*)

Shepherd 3: Yeah, (*interrupting Shepherd 2*) and then all those religious weirdo's will want a piece of the action, which is bound to upset the orthodox brigade – then you'll have the Romans sticking their oar in and before you know it the poor family will be in a right pickle.

Shepherd 2: Live and let live, that's what I say.

Shepherd 1: But we have been entrusted with sharing the Good News; we have been given the job of telling the rest of humanity that its Saviour is born.

Shepherd 3: Don't you think you're missing something?

Shepherd 1: What on earth are you taking about now?

Shepherd 3: Well in case you have forgotten, we have just been visited by a multitude of the heavenly host – we have just been witnesses to the most amazing supernatural phenomenon that there's been seen since Moses parted the Red Sea.

Shepherd 1: But that's my point

Shepherd 3: And don't you think that if the aforementioned heavenly host needs anyone else to know about this, they are perfectly capable of telling them without our help.

Shepherd 2: He's got a point there

Shepherd 3: And besides, if we did start telling people, whose going to believe us?

Shepherd 1: But we have to tell people . . . we have to go and see this for ourselves and we have to tell the world.

Shepherd 2: And who's going to look after these sheep while we are out there on this vast publicity campaign – the Angels?

Shepherd 1: But didn't you hear what they said – good news to all of humanity, this is a story that is going to echo around the world for the rest of time – we've got to be the start of that. Would you seriously expect someone to discover the source of salvation and then not want to tell the world about it?

Shepherd 3: No – that would be ridiculous.

Shepherd 2: Yeah – ridiculous, now shut up and let me get some sleep.

SCENE ENDS with shepherds 2&3 settled down for the night and Shepherd 1 still sitting up with a fair measure of disbelief at the attitude of the other two.