

# 25 Days of Advent

## Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the Christmas Story Characters

### ADVENT DAY 12: Dec. 12 – Shepherds, Humble Evangelists

#### Devotional

Stop for a minute and think – you have great news, the best news ever. Who do you want to tell? Who do you go to first? I don't know about you, but I'd tell my spouse, my closest friend, someone I trust, someone who would be there to celebrate with me.

Who did God choose to be the first to hear about Jesus' birth? The chief priests or religious leaders of the day? The kings or rulers of the land? No, God chose a bunch of shepherds out in the fields around Bethlehem.

Why shepherds? The Old Testament highlights several shepherds among Christianity's fabled past, including Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rachel, Moses, David, Job, and Amos – just to name a few. So I guess it's not too strange. But again, why these shepherds? We don't know who they were by name, or even how many there were. And while shepherds weren't highly regarded in Jesus' day, it's clear that God saw them as important. Here's what we do know:

- They were the first to be told; they were busy doing what they always do.
- They saw and heard the angel of the Lord; they were afraid at first.
- They saw and heard the host of angels praising God.
- They believed the angel of the Lord and went to see Jesus – with haste.
- They were the first evangelists; they saw Jesus long before the Wise Men. He was less than a week old in the manger.

Although we know very little about these shepherds, it's possible those near Bethlehem may have been taking care of the temple flocks, the sheep meant for sacrifice. There could be a symbolic reason as Jesus, the ultimate Lamb, would be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

But Scripture paints a more practical picture as well. Shepherds had the capacity to be humbled and amazed that God chose them to hear the news. Imagine how unworthy they must have felt, but how honored. They were far more likely to react the way God wanted than the religious leaders of the day. Because they were connected to Bethlehem they probably knew everyone and were familiar with the community. And because of that humility, because of their amazement, they couldn't keep it to themselves. After they had seen the baby Savior, they "spread the word" concerning what they knew. They weren't worried about what others thought of them. They didn't overthink the situation and talk themselves out of telling the news. They were exuberant, overflowing with joy, and probably still reflecting a bit of the glory of being with Jesus. "Can you believe this Joshua? Com'on we've got to go tell someone this wonderful news! They're gonna be amazed."

You know what happened when those uneducated, simple shepherds spread the word that a Savior had been born? People were amazed!

God in His infinite wisdom chose just the right group of people to entrust the greatest news of eternity. Those humble men took the good news of Jesus and did just what God wanted them to do – told others, and the world was never the same.

## Look Up – Connect with God

**Read:** Luke 2:8-20

**Key Verse:** “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.’” (Luke 2:15)

**Pray:** Father God, today we rejoice with the shepherds in the good news of Jesus’ birth. Help us to set aside any traditions that have become commonplace and help us again explore the amazement of Jesus’ birth. Thank you for sending a Savior for us. Give us the shepherds’ passion to spend our lives sharing this news.

## Look In – Family Memories

**Discuss:** Hand out candy canes to everyone in the family. Talk about the spiritual meaning that can be found in this holiday sweet treat. You can find those meanings in a story called, *The Candymaker’s Gift*:

- Stick of pure white, hard candy – white symbolizes the Virgin Birth and the sinless nature of Jesus; and hard to symbolize the Solid Rock, the foundation of the Church, and firmness of the promises of God.
- Form of a "J" – represents the precious name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Savior. It could also represent the staff of the Good Shepherd with which He reaches down into the ditches of the world to lift out the fallen lambs who, like all sheep, have gone astray.
- Stained with red stripes – three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received by which we are healed; a large red stripe was for the blood shed by Christ on the cross so that we could have the promise of eternal life.

So much more than just a fun minty flavored candy! Every time you see a candy cane, remember the wonder of Jesus and His great love that came down at Christmas, and that His Love remains the ultimate and dominant force in the universe today.

### **Activity:**

- Advent Tree: make or select an ornament of a candy cane and put it on the tree. [Download Ornaments](#) or [Ornament Ideas](#)
- Advent Garland: put the key verse on a paper/card, assign #12, and attach it to the garland twine. [Key Verses](#)
- Advent Cards: select a card and see what the activity might be (i.e., make a Christmas card or gift for your teacher). [Family Activities](#)

## Look Out – Connect with Others

Have a small Christmas gathering for your neighbors or co-workers. Share what Christ has done for you and your family and invite them to share in celebrating his birth with you at church on Christmas. Alternatively, if your church is hosting a Christmas play or pageant, invite friends and coworkers to attend.