



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24

LUKE 2:8-14

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

My uncle was a sheep farmer until he retired a few years ago. I saw him win many ribbons at the State Fair, but I never did see the dirty work behind his wins: feedings in the wee hours, shoveling manure, shearing, and attending at the birth of the lambs. Shepherding is a dirty job, even more so during the time of Jesus. In fact, being a shepherd was considered an unclean occupation in the first century Palestine and while they served an important purpose, shepherds were on the margins of Jewish society. What then is the significance of birth of Jesus being announced first to the shepherds? It affirms that the Messiah, Emmanuel, God-with-us, is the God of the margins, not the God of the center. He is a God who, in the words of Mary’s Magnificat, “lifted up the lowly” (Luke 1:52). We are called to go and do likewise.

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