

GO Sermon Series – Part 7

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

Pastor Dale Campfield - December 19th, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Intro:

We’ve stepped up, realizing the plan of God for our lives: The Great Commission and the Great Commandment; to love God and others, making disciples of all. We’ve learned how to STAND, against the enemy, making the decision to not bow. Now, it’s time to GO. It’s time to practice what we preach.

Key Verse: Mark 16:15

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

This Week: “Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

You just years the song, "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" sung by our worship team.

What does mountain mean?

There are a lot of famous mountains... does it mean those?

Mt. Arrarat – Noah’s Ark

Mt. Sinai – Moses and the 10 Commandments

Mt. Killimingero – Tallest mountain in Africa maybe?

Mt. St. Joseph – the University in >>>>?

Mt. Dew

Mountain - a place where everyone can here you.

You don't hide it. You're not ashamed about it. You want everyone in the path of your life to know that Jesus was born!

When you SHOUT it from your mountain... something electrifying happens....

Illus: people stand and shout...

Who did this? Let's look at the shepherds.

Text: Luke 2: 6 - 20

The main points I want to bring out today are...

The shepherds were “shouters”. They were “Shouting Shepherds”. They shouted it from their mountains. They shouted it to everyone in the path of their life. They went to the place where Jesus was born, met Him, and then took the news out! That’s what we are to do. We meet Jesus. We go to the place where Jesus is, we experience Him, He becomes a part of us, then we SHOUT it to everyone we meet! We become Shouting Shepherds!

A closer look at these Shouting Shepherds

Look #1: The Shouting Shepherds were just ordinary people with ordinary jobs.

But... God’s uses ordinary people for extraordinary events. Wants to use you, at the point you are in life right now, for an extraordinary message – of Christ’s love. God always uses the humble, the poor in spirit, and the ones who are not high and mighty.

It wasn’t the world’s oldest profession but it was close! I mean you know what the world’s oldest profession is right? That’s right, farming. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain the oldest was a farmer, thus making that the world’s oldest profession. What were you thinking? And Abel the younger brother was a shepherd making that the world’s second oldest profession.

If there is one scene that seems to shout Christmas to us it would be the shepherds on the hillside staring in wonder at an angel choir in the sky. And we all know the story and Christmas wouldn’t be complete without the keepers of sheep pressed in tight to see the one would be called the lamb of God.

And although they weren’t lead characters the shepherds were part of the chorus in the production of the first Christmas. When I was in high school I played in play called, “They Went That a Way”, and played one of the leading roles. I was mentioned in the credits. When in grade school, I could have been the scare crow, but opted to be a Munchkin. I was then just a supporting actor, no name in the credits. And when they were casting the musical they would cast the male lead and the female lead and then the supporting roles. And all those roles had names, and were highlighted in the program, especially the main people. And then they got to the bulk of the players and they were called the Chorus. And that’s where I ended up, in the chorus of munchkins. But you couldn’t have the musical without the chorus. If you just had the leads you wouldn’t have a musical you would just have a small ensemble.

In the same way there were the leads in the Christmas story, Mary and Joseph, the angel Gabriel and the baby Jesus. They get top billing. And then there were the supporting roles. The innkeeper, King Herod and the Wise Men. They got second billing. And then you have the chorus. That would be the angels who we will talk about next week and the shepherds. If you were doing up a program from that first Christmas they would be listed in a group after all the others in the play it would say “and the shepherds.”

But they weren't just peripheral or window dressing they were a vital part of the story.

Who They Were. I know you are probably thinking, “Hey Dale they were shepherds, duhh. Well sure they were, but what does that mean today. For most of us the closest we've ever come to a shepherd is wearing a wool sweater and eating lamb chops. And so because when we think of shepherds we immediately shift to the Christmas story we have kind of romanticize who they were what they did. But really they were just guys who watched sheep. Probably wasn't an intensive training program for the job and they probably weren't anywhere near the top of the economic heap. Nor would they have been near the top of the social heap or even the religious heap.

The problem was their jobs, the demands of the flock were so great that even if the shepherds were inclined to be religious all of the rules and regulations of Judaism, with the various hand washings and other parts of the ceremonial law, were out of their reach, so they could never really be “Good Jews”

The second thing we need to look at is Who They Weren't. The biggest surprise here is that they weren't anyone special. I mean if I was God, creator of all things, master of the universe and I was announcing the birth of my Son I'm not sure that shepherds would have made the short list. Or for that matter the long list. Kings, emperors, potentates they would have been the ones on my list, not the keepers of sheep.

But these guys were just ordinary people with ordinary jobs. Nothing special, just a bunch of shepherds doing what shepherds do, watching their flocks. However in saying that it's seems as if God has a special place for shepherds, Abel who was commended for his offering was a shepherd, Moses who led the people of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt was a shepherd and David, Israel's greatest king and the writer of the psalms was a shepherd.

Now that being said there are those who have speculated that even though they were shepherds they may not have been your everyday run of the mill shepherds. Culturally we are told that because of the frequent sacrifices at the temple, every morning and evening an unblemished lamb was to be sacrificed, that the temple authorities kept their own private flock of sheep. And historically we are told that these sheep would have been pastured near Bethlehem. And if all of those things are true then there is a pretty good chance that these shepherds were in charge of the flocks from which the temple offerings were chosen. And if that is the case then it is pretty cool that the birth of the “Lamb of God” who would take away the sins of the world was first announced to those whose job it was to take care of the temple lambs, who were sacrificed for peoples sins.

And into the ordinary lives of ordinary men is injected an extraordinary event. Most of us aren't special enough for God to take an interest in our lives, but He does. Remember the words of Jesus in Luke 12:6-7 “What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

Look #2: The Shouting Shepherds experienced the same emotions we do.

If they were human being, (which we are too), then they probably had times of sorrow, joy, pain, hurt, etc. They were thankful to have a job I'm sure. They had to be away from their families. They had to deal with walking long distances. They had to deal with those SHEEP! The sheep that would bring them joy and pain at the same time. What a hassle to take care of sheep! They had all of the same emotions that we have to deal with.

Christmas is not all it is made be to be. A lot of people would rather skip the festivities altogether. 63% of respondents to a 1998 Dateline NBC/Prevention Magazine Holiday Stress survey said they felt pressure to do things they did not want to do during the holidays, and 64% reported feeling nervous and stressed about the entire season. The seasonal stress has a name to it: SAD for "seasonal affective disorder," or what people used to call the "winter blues."

Money was the biggest stress factor, of course: 72 percent worry about money at least some time during the holidays. Even though a good 15 percent always dread the holiday season, 9 percent end up having a good time anyway. Just 6 percent of participants manage to hang on to that dread right through the New Year's celebrations. Naturally holiday stress is more prevalent the farther north you go, with 1 percent to 5 percent of those living in middle to northern latitudes reporting SAD symptoms. Women, particularly young adults, account for 60 percent to 90 percent of those affected by this seasonal pattern of depression. ("Dear Data Dog," American Demographics, Dec. 2000)

The angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and the glory of the Lord "shone around" (peri-lampo) them (v 9), terrifying the shepherds. This Greek word for "shone around" occurs only twice in the Bible, the other time describing Paul's experience on the road when he saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, "blazing around" him (Acts 26:13). The first New Testament evangelist, technically, was not John the Baptist (Lk 3:18), but the Christmas angel. This is the first time the verb "euaggelizo" or "evangelize" (v 10) appears in the New Testament. NIV clumsily translated the word as "I bring you good news."

The Greek text used the word fear twice to describe how the shepherds felt at the angel's sudden appearance: The shepherds "feared" (phobeo) a great fear (phobos megas)!" (v 9) But the angel did not come to strike great fear, but in contrast, to spread great joy or "chara megas" (v 10). Christmas is the proclamation of not just joy, but great joy, one of only two great joys associated with Christ - great joy at his birth (Luke 2:10, Matt 2:10) and great joy at his resurrection (Luke 24:52, Matt 28:8).

The great joy of Christmas is the birth of the baby Jesus, the Savior, the Christ, the Lord. He is the Christ, the Promise, the Anointed One, or the Coming Messiah, whose birth was prophesied in the Old Testament. In Micah 5:2, the promise of a ruler in Israel would come from Bethlehem. The word Lord is a recurring word in this passage (vv 9, 9, 11, 15). He is our Lord, the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8), Lord Almighty (2 Cor 6:18), the Lord of lords (Rev 17:14).

This great joy is for all the peoples of the world – Jews and Gentiles, shepherds and Magi (Matt 2:10), angels and men. It is cause for true celebration among the Chosen Ones and the Goyim, the rich and the poor, heaven and earth.

Illus: There are some people in our lives who try and take the joy out of everything. i.e. The Grinch Who Stole Christmas

I love the story of the Dr. Seuss' The Grinch Who Stole Christmas. The Grinch was a mean, ugly, lonely make-believe creature who hated Christmas and decided to put an end to it after enduring the merry-making villagers' noise and nonsense for fifty three years.

On Christmas Eve, he put on a Santa Clause hat and coat, stole into the village, climbed into the chimneys and quietly took all the presents for himself while the villagers were sleeping. He took everything that would resemble Christmas, including tree, stocking, and decoration, and gloated anticipating the villagers' reaction when they discovered that all their presents were gone on Christmas morning itself.

The next morning the Grinch woke up to the singing he had heard for over half a century at this time of the year. He looked out his window saw that he had failed to dampen the villagers' Christmas spirit. He waited for people to declare Christmas season a disaster or a letdown, but instead the people started singing. "Why?" the Grinch asked. Because Christmas is the celebration of what's inside, not outside. The great joy and the real joy of Christmas is the birth of Jesus that can never be taken away. The Grinch had stolen all the presents, toys and decorations but the villagers did not miss them. They were still standing together, holding hands and singing joyfully. Happiness is fleeting, but joy is lasting. Parties do not last. The Chinese say, "There is no party under heaven that never ends."

Look #3: The Shouting Shepherds shouted alone.

The shepherds were the first believers of the gospel. The fact is, it can be embarrassing to be the only one shouting. Have you ever been to the movies or a concert and it was loud, so you were shouting to the person you were trying to talk to and then the music went silent and everyone could hear you? Have you ever been the only one shouting at a basketball game?

The shepherd shouted alone. They decided to check out the baby by night. They believed the words of the Christmas angel, left the country for the city of Bethlehem, hurrying in the middle of the night to look for the baby in a manger. The word "tell" is an inescapable key word in this passage. The angels told the shepherd (2:17), and the shepherds told others (2:18) what they were told (2:20). Praise the Lord, the greatest event in history was shared with shepherds who passed the good news to others. God did not come down in a palace, surrounded with servants, shrouded in secrecy.

The angels said, "Peace on earth to men on whom his favor rests."

We're shouting today to a world of people who are lost and need Jesus Christ. One hundred years ago, the United Nations began awarding prize money in memory of Alfred Nobel to individuals or groups that have done the most to promote peace between nations. The Nobel Peace Prize, worth about a million US dollars, is the most coveted international prize.

Nobel was the Swedish industrialist who invented dynamite and held more than 350 patents, which made him very rich. At his death in 1895, the bachelor left a sizable fortune to a foundation dedicated to recognizing excellence in science, medicine, literature, and peace efforts.

However, no individual or group, not even the United Nations, can do anything to bring lasting peace. 250 wars have been fought in the 20th century alone and more than 110 million people, including 63 million civilians, died in the conflicts, according to figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. Geir Lundestad, director of the Nobel Institute, said, "If the criterion for success is the Nobel Peace Prize's ability to put an end to wars, then the prize is certainly a failure. And it will remain a failure." The twentieth century was the bloodiest century in the history of mankind, and the new century is not getting any better.

World peace, personal peace and or relational peace are precarious and are hanging by a thread. God's peace is different. If you notice, NIV does not use the phrase "goodwill to men" anymore. The word

goodwill or “eu-dokia” in the Greek text is a combination of two words, “eu-” as in eulogy or saying good things and “dokia” or thinking. So goodwill means thinking good or having a good mindset. The whole translation means peace on earth and a good mindset to men. That’s the gift of Christmas – the gift of a peaceful mind.

God’s gift of peace of mind is not a feeling or a drug, a legislation of the court or a treaty of nations, a surplus of money or an absence of war. It is not an extra piece of cake, a set of formulas or a recitation of chants. It is a peaceful mindset knowing God’s unchanging gift of salvation; it is not tied to external factors or changing circumstances. Peace in the modern world is overrated and suspicious. Personal peace can be easily shattered by an emergency call, a traffic accident, or a crime scene, but God’s peace is secured by Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

The Americans were taught a difficult age-old lesson on September 11: Power cannot buy peace of mind. Being on top is a blessing and a curse. The Chinese said, “Big trees invite winds.” This Christmas, our nerves are frayed more than ever. We will not experience peace of mind until we receive and embrace the gift of peace in Christ Jesus, which is priceless. By our own efforts we fail. Others disappoint us. Only the most powerful - the Omnipotent God, only the most knowledgeable - the Omniscient God, and only the most attending - the Omnipresent God - can give us peace.

The message of Christmas is simple. When you look outside of Christ, you will find unending misery. Look to Christ and you will find abiding peace. We might be alone shouting it, but it must still be shouted. You might be the only one in your office that is shouting, but you still have to shout. You might be the only one in your family that is shouting, but you still have to shout!

Conclusion:

Do you have the peace of God, which transcends all understanding? Do you desire God’s peace to guard your hearts and your minds? (Phil 4:7) Do you have Jesus in your heart and the peace that the world can’t give and the world can’t take it away? Christmas does not mean eating, shopping, or traveling. Make haste and don’t hesitate. Pursue, discover and experience Christ for yourself. Are you a quiet, passive and ignorant observer, listener and believer? The Christmas angel appeared to make believers, eyewitnesses and evangelists out of unsuspecting shepherds. Do you tell others what you know and believe, and what you have seen and heard? Are you able to shout the fact that Jesus was born because He’s alive in you? If not, you can begin that relationship today by asking Him to take control of you life. THEN SHOUT IT!

And as you do.... You watch, You wait, You’ll see!

Here are a few notes for you to look a little closer at the scripture....

As I read the story again it dawned on me that the twelve verses that tell the story about the shepherds is a look at how most of us became Christ Followers. And you are thinking “Dale I don’t even like sheep and there were no

angels involved when I became a believer.” Perhaps but bear with me. Luke 2:9-11 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!”

We all know the story, the shepherds are in the field watching their sheep when suddenly an angel appears with a message. “The Messiah is here!” and then that angel is joined by a whole flock of angels who are proclaiming the goodness of God.

In its most literal sense the word “angel” as used in the original language simply meant messenger now that doesn’t negate who appeared to the Shepherds that first Christmas. These weren’t just messengers, these were Heavenly messengers. Luke tells us in Luke 2:13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God. . . Now most of us don’t get Angels in the traditional sense, and if you did, cool. But the majority of us do get a messenger with news about Jesus.

We see a great example of this in John 1:40-41 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”). Andrew heard about Jesus from John and then Simon heard about Jesus from Andrew.

Who was it that told you about Jesus for the first time? Who was your angel? For most of us, we don’t just stumble into Christianity. I mean it does happen sometimes, and when it does it makes a great story. For example, Billy Sunday was a professional baseball player for the Chicago White Stockings and one Sunday afternoon in 1886 he and some of his fellow players had a few beers and were wandering through the streets of Chicago where Sunday heard a street preaching team from the Pacific Garden Mission. And the rest as they say is history. Billy Sunday became a Christ follower and went on to become the Billy Graham of his time, or more correctly Billy Graham became the Billy Sunday of his time. Over the course of his ministry Sunday preached to a 100 million people and recorded over a million converts.

But most of us have someone, friend, family or a co-worker who brings the message to us and invites us to come. Paul spells it out for us in Romans 10:14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

And so it was on a lonely hillside outside of Bethlehem that the Angels came and told the shepherds about Jesus. And the story continues.

Luke 2:15-16 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.

They Came to Jesus.

Now the reality is that the Shepherds could have heard the message and thought “Well that was interesting” and then simply returned to their sheep. But they made a conscious decision to leave the everyday and venture into the eternal.

Simon Peter could have listened to what his brother Andrew told him and then gone back to fishing instead of going to meet Jesus.

It’s not enough to hear the message unless we actually respond to it. And we all have that choice; the choice to respond to the claims of the gospel or reject the claims of the gospel. There are some of you here today who have heard the message over and over again, and your response is the same as King Agrippa’s response in the book of Acts.

Maybe you know the story and maybe you don't. Paul has been hauled before the authorities, including King Agrippa, for preaching and he launches into his story and his conversion experience. And then he says to Agrippa: Acts 26:27 (NKJV) King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." And Agrippa looks at him and responds Acts 26:28 (NKJV) Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." And two thousand years ago almost wasn't good enough for Agrippa and it's not good enough today. Just think, he missed it by that much.

If you are going to be a Christ follower first you have to make the decision to come to Christ in order to follow him. It is a conscious decision that you have to make, yes I am going to do this. For the shepherds that meant physically leaving the fields and their flocks and coming into Bethlehem and then finding the stable where Jesus was.

Today it means that for a little while we too leave the everyday and venture into the eternal, accepting who Jesus is and embracing his claims and the grace and forgiveness he offers. John spells it out in his gospel. John 1:12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

But the shepherd's story doesn't end in the stable, Luke 2:17-18 After seeing him (Jesus), the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished,

They Told Others About Jesus.

I love this, they could not contain what had happened in their lives and wanted everyone to know about it. Isn't that what normally happens when we make a new discovery? Whether it's a great new restaurant, or a movie, or book or musical artist. We want to tell those we care about the news.

D. T. Niles was a Sri Lankan preacher and the head of the Methodist church in Sri Lanka and he summed it up this way: "Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."

The problem is that we have made evangelism into some mysteriously difficult thing that only professionals or special people can do. But listen again to how Andrew did it: John 1:40-41 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").

He just told his brother what he had experienced, didn't hand him a tract or led him down the Roman Road, just told him, "Hey I met Jesus." And then if we keep reading we discover John 1:42 Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus.

In His book *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* Tom Ranier and his colleagues interviewed several hundred people in both the US and Canada who do not attend church, they are unchurched people. And they made some surprising discoveries. This is one of those discoveries: 82 Percent of the unchurched are at least "somewhat likely" to attend church if they are invited. Perhaps we need to pause here to allow that to sink in, maybe we need to restate it 82 Percent of the unchurched are at least "somewhat likely" to attend church if they are invited. If you don't remember anything else from this message hang on to that. 8 out of 10 of your friends and co-workers would be at least somewhat likely to attend church if you invited them. So what is an invitation? For many of the unchurched it would simply mean being asked. For others it included the offer to meet them at the front door to show them around. But in either case it goes back to a simple premise of: invite them and there is a pretty good chance that they will come.

The story goes that an atheist once told William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, "I do not believe in your God; I do not believe in your Bible; I do not believe in your hell. But if I did, I'd crawl across London on my knees across broken glass to warn them!"

So there can only be one of two reasons for why we don't tell people about Jesus 1) We don't really believe that what we've discovered about Jesus is all that important or 2) We really don't care about people's eternity.

The story goes on, Luke 2:20 The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

It Affected their Daily Lives.

Did you catch what happened? They went back to work but they didn't leave their experience behind them. For too many people they are quite content to leave Jesus either in the manger or on the cross but there is no room in their everyday lives for Him.

But He is supposed to make a difference in our lives, such a difference that your entire life has been changed and it appears to be brand new. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

A pastor by the name of Eugene Peterson has done a paraphrase of the Bible called The Message, and this is how he translates Romans 12:1 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.

If you are one person when you are in church and another person when you are at school or work and yet another one when you are with your family then you are wearing a mask at least some of the time. 2000 years ago in the Greek theatre the actors all wore masks and there was a Greek word that was used for actors and it literally meant a mask wearer and it was ὑποκριτῆς that same word is translated into English as hypocrite, and two thousand years ago that was a neutral word, sure isn't today.

Our encounter with Christ needs to affect who we are and how we live. You can't just take him as a fire escape from hell and continue to live like you always lived. If he doesn't make a difference on this side of eternity it is doubtful that he will make a difference on the other side of eternity.

After the shepherds encountered Jesus they went back to their flocks, they didn't stay at the stable or even in Bethlehem but they went back to the hills where their sheep were waiting.

Our witness to what Christ has done in our lives will be played out not in church but in our daily lives. How we deal with our family, our job and our finances. What would Jesus Do became a cliché ten years ago but the question needs to be asked: What would Jesus want me to do?

At this time of year we give gifts to people we love, how about giving a birthday gift to Christ for the same reason? You don't even have to go to the store or shop online, he even tells us what he would like for a gift so we don't have to guess and you don't even have to wrap it. John 14:15 Jesus said "If you love me, obey my commandments."