



Near and Now

When My Calling Brings Joy – Shepherds
By Jasmine DeLara

Warm-up Question

What is some good news you have recently received?



Picture by Merve Sehirli Nasir on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

The Shepherds Returned, Glorifying and Praising God

Read [Luke 2:8-20](#)

Bible Story Reflection

This story is widely recognized as the Christmas story, heard all over the world as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. God uses this passage to express the relationship between the joy we have in our lives and the coming of the Messiah. A great company of angels sings about this relationship in verse 14 singing, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14). The joy and peace we experience comes when Christ rules in our lives. God’s purpose is not to give you peace apart from himself.

When engaging with this passage we must be cautious not to add our own details to the scripture. Do not read it as the familiar story you know but, engage with a fresh perspective looking at the passage alone. It is also helpful to know the difference between glory and praise and why we use both words. Glory is to exult with joy, it is to have a great beauty or splendor, so grand that it is considered powerful. Praise is to worship, to express admiration.

With that in mind, we are invited to see joy in a variety of ways. The shepherds live out their calling of joy by not keeping the good news of Jesus’ birth to themselves. After their encounter with the angels, they hurried off to see Jesus, and proceeded to spread the word to anyone they met that night. The joy that we have is meant to be experienced in community with others. Mary’s joy was more subdued. Mary had been given an extraordinary gift from God and after the events of that night experienced a state of bliss in the miracles that God gave her. She was at peace in the life that she had been given and serves as an example to us in that blissful peace. Finally, we can see joy through the angels. Their calling brought elation, great excitement, in the form of music. We are invited to reflect on how our various callings bring joy to ourselves as well as our community.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you resonate with this passage?
2. In what ways do you have dissonance with this passage? What challenges you about this passage?
3. Talk about a time when you had an encounter with God. What emotions did that encounter bring forward?
4. What do we learn about God’s love for us through the shepherd’s encounter with the angels?
5. In what ways do you identify with the shepherds?
6. How do you think the shepherds would tell their own story?
7. How is the God who brings peace visible today?
8. How are you called to be the presence of the God who brings good news for others?

Activity Suggestions

Think of someone or several people who have brought joy to your life. Write them a thank you card.

Create a worship space. Sing songs similar to the one the angels sang, filled with joy and praise.

Create a list of at least 20 different ways you can be the presence of God who brings joy to others. From there narrow the list down until everyone has one practical idea that they can bring joy to others. Pray that God will give you an opportunity to bring that joy to others.

Prayer Concerns

Those who feel alone or without community, those who struggle to find joy in their life, and for God to give us peace.

Closing Prayer

I am in awe of your gifts of grace, O God. Accept the gratitude and praise of my heart. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

