



# *Lakeside Sermons*

Lakeside Baptist Church • Rocky Mount, North Carolina  
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DECEMBER 7, 2014  
THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
*CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS*

## Reflections of Love: The Shepherds Luke 2: 8-14

There is something about being outside on a clear night when darkness quiets the world and the soft light of moon and stars transforms the world. In that stillness, nature invites us to quiet contemplation. We may entertain small thoughts recalled from earlier in the day or larger thoughts about purpose and meaning and God. It is a familiar and desired opportunity, sometimes found in the mountains, at the beach, in an ancient city far away, or in our own backyard. We enjoy crawling into our thoughts in the midst of the stillness of night.

We understand, then, at least to some degree, the mood of the shepherds on that Judean night long ago. Repetition, tradition and borrowed nostalgia have layered over history, but the melodic words of scripture never fail to stir within us that twinge of recognition when we hear, "There were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night." Though few, if any, of us have ever had a flock over which to watch, we know something about abiding. We, too, have waited and endured, tolerated and survived. We have had occasions to stay put for whatever reasons. The shepherds were watching over their sheep. It may not have been the best job in the world. Wages were meager. Absences from home were often long. The sheep were sometimes irritating. Danger always lurked nearby. It was a solitary life, but most shepherds liked it that way. They enjoyed being outside with the animals, embracing nature, and being alone with their thoughts.

We understand how a still night can stir thoughts of the past and hopes for the future. We look back on what we have done and imagine things we might yet do. And we think about God. We think about what God has done and yet might do. We wonder why life has unfolded as it has and whether God will do the things we want God to do.

Good Jewish shepherds took pride in the fact that King David had once been a shepherd and that the Messiah would be like a shepherd to his people. They liked to imagine that one day a stranger would greet them in a

lonely pasture and introduce himself as the Messiah. How something like that would change their status in Hebrew life!

Then one night, in the midst of their ruminations, a messenger from God suddenly stood before them and announced that their dreams had come true, their yearnings had come to pass, their prayers had been answered. A child was born. A Savior! The Messiah!

Yanked from their thoughts to their feet, the shepherds were overwhelmed. They did not know whether to be thrilled or afraid. Angelic music wrapped them in a warmth they had never known, a joy they had never experienced, a love they had never felt. There was nothing to do but find the child and worship him. Flush with excitement, they hurried toward the star that hovered over the little town of Bethlehem.

When the shepherds learned that the Christ Child was born, they were filled with love and that love had to be expressed in worship. Composing his "Christmas Oratorio," Camille Saint-Saëns understood what the shepherds thought and felt. In this beautiful work, we hear the story of the angels sharing the Good News with the shepherds. What follows is what we might imagine as the various reflections of the shepherds upon hearing the news. The shepherds remind us that our initial response to the coming of Christ is worship. We offer our love and gratitude to God for what this gift means to us.

As we hear this beautiful work this morning, may we, too, be moved to worship as we reflect the coming of Christ to the world. Amen.