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Everlasting Father

Christmas Presence: Eternal Gifts, Divine Presence

Introduction

The story of the birth of Jesus is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. It is told in the Gospel of Luke, which is one of the four books in the New Testament that talk about the life and teachings of Jesus. In Luke 2:8-20, we learn about the shepherds who were the first people to hear the good news about Jesus' birth. This story is special because it shows how Jesus came to bring peace and joy to everyone, even the people who were often forgotten or overlooked by society.

Here, we will look closely at what happened in this story, why it is important, and how it can teach us valuable lessons today. After that, we will offer some questions for small group discussions to help us think about the story and its meaning.

The Shepherds in the Fields (Luke 2:8-9)

The story begins with a group of shepherds who were out in the fields, watching over their sheep at night. Shepherds were very important in ancient Israel because they took care of the sheep, but they were also seen as lowly or humble people. They didn't have fancy jobs or live in big houses, and many people didn't think much of them.

But it was to these shepherds that the angel appeared with amazing news. The Bible tells us that "an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them." Imagine being a shepherd, quietly working in the fields under the stars, and suddenly seeing a bright light and an angel! The shepherds were terrified, as anyone might be in that situation. But the angel reassured them, saying, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." (Luke 2:10)

This announcement was very important. The angel was telling the shepherds that something amazing had happened — the long-awaited Savior had been born in Bethlehem. This was the good news, or "gospel," that Jesus had come into the world.

The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:10-12)

The angel went on to explain that the Savior, the Messiah, had been born that very night. But there was a special sign to help the shepherds find Him. The angel told them, "You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12) A manger was a feeding trough for animals, so the fact that the baby Jesus was lying in a manger showed that He was born in humble circumstances.

This part of the story is significant because it shows that Jesus, the Son of God, was not born in a palace or surrounded by riches. He was born in a simple stable, showing that He came to bring hope to all people, not just the rich or powerful.

A Heavenly Choir (Luke 2:13-14)

After the angel spoke, something even more amazing happened. A whole choir of angels appeared in the sky, praising God. They said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests." (Luke 2:14) This beautiful moment shows that the birth of Jesus was not just a small event. It was a celebration in heaven. The angels were praising God because Jesus' birth meant peace and hope for the world.

The message from the angels was clear: Jesus came to bring peace, not just for a few people, but for all of humanity. This is why Christmas is often called a time of peace and joy. It reminds us that Jesus came to heal brokenness and bring hope to every person, no matter who they are.

The Shepherds Visit Jesus (Luke 2:15-20)

After the angels left, the shepherds didn't waste any time. They decided to go to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus. The Bible tells us that they hurried off to find Him. When they arrived, they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby just as the angel

had said. They were so amazed by what they saw that they began telling everyone about the angel's message and the birth of the Savior.

The shepherds became the first to share the good news of Jesus' birth. Even though they were not rich or famous, they had an important role in spreading the word. This teaches us that God can use anyone, no matter their background, to do something important for His kingdom.

After seeing Jesus, the shepherds returned to their fields, praising God for all they had seen and heard. The Bible tells us that they glorified and praised God for the amazing things that had been revealed to them. Mary, the mother of Jesus, treasured these things in her heart and thought deeply about them. This shows that both the shepherds and Mary were filled with awe and wonder at what God had done.

Why This Story Is Important

The story of the shepherds is important for several reasons. First, it shows that Jesus came for everyone, not just for the rich or powerful. The shepherds were the first to hear the good news because Jesus' love and grace are for all people, no matter who they are or where they come from.

Second, the angels' message reminds us of the peace that Jesus brings. His birth was a sign that God was doing something new in the world. Through Jesus, God was offering forgiveness, healing, and peace to all people.

Finally, the shepherds teach us how to respond to good news. When they heard about Jesus, they didn't keep it to themselves. They told everyone they met about what they had seen and heard. Like the shepherds, we are called to share the good news of Jesus with others.

Discussion Questions for Small Groups

1. What does the title "Everlasting Father" mean to you?
2. How does the idea of Jesus as an "Everlasting Father" bring comfort to you personally?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is "everlasting"?

4. How does Jesus, as an "Everlasting Father," show love and care differently than earthly fathers?
5. In what ways does Jesus provide guidance and discipline as an "Everlasting Father"?
6. What does it look like for us to reflect the "Everlasting Father" to others?
7. How can understanding Jesus as the "Everlasting Father" help you in your relationship with God the Father?

Conclusion

The story of the shepherds in Luke 2:8-20 teaches us important lessons about God's love, peace, and the joy that comes with the birth of Jesus. The shepherds were the first to hear the good news, and their response was to share it with others. Jesus came to bring peace to everyone, and through His birth, we see that God's love reaches out to all people, no matter their status or background. This Christmas season, let us remember the shepherds' story and the great joy that Jesus' birth brings to the world.