

12/19/2021 - "Go and Tell"

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[0 : 00] We're going to be going through another Advent topic today, going through a song. It's very common to all of us, and this series has been fun.

It's been challenging, but it has been fun to really dive in and dissect a song, and then following the song, just singing it.

It really brings, when you know what you're singing and the weight of the words that you're singing and how it can apply to your life, it's just intense.

It's something that we often take for granted when we don't look at the words and we just hear that melody that's common to us. But as we turn to God's Word today in our lives, I think that we often find ourselves opening the pages of Scripture and relating to various people or things or instances that are going on.

So if you're reading about a woman in the Bible, obviously a woman would relate in various aspects with that account of a woman or a man with a man or children or widows.

[1 : 20] We also relate to attitudes and things that are going on emotionally speaking. When we see fear in the Bible, we relate to the fear, anxiety, the doubts, the frustrations.

All of this, we enter into the Bible and we find things that we relate to. And these connections that we relate to often bring the words that we read upon a page to life within our own contexts, within our own situations.

And definitely by the power of the Holy Spirit, the transcendent Word applying in our lives today, within this realm of philosophy of how we read Scripture and relate to it, we often look to a musical piece called Go Tell It on the Mountain, which is the song we're going to look at today.

This is a song that was motivated by a unique perspective, a unique perspective of the shepherd's account found in Luke 2.

And this is at the arrival of the good news of Jesus Christ. This song contains and was written by an unknown author.

[2 : 45] An unknown author back in the dark, dark period in American history in the mid to late 1800s. And it was written by an African American slave who was legally traded, bought, and trafficked in this country.

A dark period in our history. It's a time where both the world and, quote, Christians allowed this to be condoned.

Such evil to take place to fellow image bearers, an act of man that God just does not honor. And within these plantations around the Civil War time period was a melody that sprang from the fields that ironically pronounced the church to go and tell.

Although their circumstances bound them to their work. And so today we're going to see the unique perspective of a slave who chose to capture the first advent of Christ through the lens of a shepherd.

And when we're talking about relating to the Bible, consider the context that this song was composed and written within the fields, within the sweat dripping from brows.

[4 : 09] The lack of hope of anything in their circumstance changing. They were born into slavery. They're going to die in slavery. There's no hope of earthly freedom.

Many of the slaves were unable to read the Bible. And this unknown slave imagined and connected the emotions of shepherds as a powerful light from heaven shone down upon them.

An account of Luke where frightened shepherds experienced the power that they couldn't comprehend. They were greeted by angelic voices trumpeting the birth of the Savior. They left their flock unknown of where they're going.

And they arrived at a baby in a manger in humble surroundings. And it was here that the shepherds found understanding, knowledge, and God's love. And it was also here that propelled a melody that sprang from those fields of freedom amid slavery.

And I believe it is a call for every Christian to rise and take action regardless of our immediate circumstance. And we can learn something from this composer and this author.

[5 : 19] Paradoxically speaking, there's no reason, rhyme or reason, why this song should have survived through the past two centuries. From a field, we can attribute a lot of that credit to John Wesley's work, the first, second, and third.

Through three generations, they preserved and put a choir melody to that song that we know so well today. But the words of this unknown slave have gone out.

It has told the good news to the world throughout these past two centuries. Therefore, by the end of our time today, I believe God's word instilled and applied will propel us into the mission field in which we too have been planted.

And so let's pray as we enter into God's word. We're going to look at that account, word by word, in Luke 2. And as this song refers to.

And let's allow God, through his Holy Spirit, ignite us into the similar mission that drove this melody. Let's pray as we enter in.

[6 : 33] Father, thank you for your word and something that we know is true regardless of our feelings or our doubts.

It is true throughout time. And Father, help us to enter your word today, submitting to your word, and seeing how your word has been uniquely applied within a simple chorus that we know so well. Father, help us to be glorified by this time, challenge, and ignite this church in mission for you. We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay. Let's do the first section.

I'm going to break this up into three different sections. The song actually has four different stanzas. I'm going to combine the first two because they're thematically similar. And I'm going to look. If you guys can open your Bibles to Luke 2.

[7 : 36] That's where we're going to be. It's not going to be up on the screen. We're going to pick up the old-fashioned Bible. If you want to be the new or old-fashioned, pull up your Bible app. That'll do.

We're going to see the first section of the shepherd's encounter. And this is going to be the first of three acts. This is going to be act one, the shepherd's encounter.

Hearing no pages flipped, I guess you're ready to go. Luke 2, verse 8. It says, And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you.

[8 : 50] You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

But the angels, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

Let's stop there for a moment and look at what's transpiring. Boy, what a miraculous event that happened in real history, in real time.

It is mind-boggling. Luke is the only gospel writer that captures this account of the shepherds. He's the only writer that captures this account. Which I think and I imagine that this brings meaning to the thematic tone of his gospel, where Luke is consistently communicating unique stories that reveal that Jesus has come for the powerless, not the powerful, the people who are in need, not the people who are self-sufficient.

[10 : 25] That's not saying that the self-sufficient people don't have a chance to come to Jesus. They do too. However, Luke's intention is to reveal the mission of Jesus to the powerless.

And so it's not surprising why this is the only account listed within the gospels. They all have different writers, all four different portraits of Jesus Christ and the mission. This is his portrait because he's keeping his audience in mind as he's writing shepherds. This is the first and second verse within the song, Go Tell It on the Mountain, that lists quickly the event and response of this passage perfectly.

Here are the words of the unknown slave of the 1800s who understood what was going on and condensed it within two stanzas.

He said, It's like the cliff note version of what the gospel of Luke just revealed.

[11 : 45] And church, if we can understand one thing that's vitally important about Luke's intention for the gospel, us singing a song that was written from a person without any hope and freedom, one thing that we can understand is that the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, has no concern for status.

Yes. Galatians 3.28 makes it clear. Nor slave nor free. All are one in Jesus Christ. Salvation brings all these categories into the same salvation.

All is for all. And think about the cultural period of this writing. The author, he's enslaved his entire life. I would imagine he would be connected to Luke's unique perspective of the lowly shepherds in a lowly manger.

And while shepherds were not slaves, the least bit, their social status was quite relatable because they were basically the bottom rung of society.

They were people who had no reputable voice within the public square being a shepherd. And they were the poorest in the lands.

[13 : 10] So the truth and implications of this encounter should hit us all to the heart of exactly and precisely of how God works.

The truth of this account is revealed in Luke 2. Jesus, the good news, has come to lowly shepherds. The people who are the poorest have no social status or standing of any significance in life, has come.

And the implications of this account is revealed from the heart of a slave who wrote this into a song in these lonely fields, laboring away their entire life, enslaved on this earth.

You see, regardless of who we think we are on the societal spectrum, it doesn't matter how many likes you have on your Instagram, it doesn't matter how many zeros you have in your bank account, we are all in need of the same grace.

And grace has no concern for our categories. And salvation is available to all. Think. This is a remarkable, grand appearance of angels.

[14 : 34] God didn't reveal this good news to the halls of Caesar. See, Luke didn't record how I would have recorded it. Or how I would have wished it would have been done.

He didn't reveal this in the halls of Caesar. He didn't reveal it in the temples of Jerusalem and show those Pharisees who's boss and who's really in charge.

No. These angels appeared to lowly shepherds outside of Bethlehem. We are all the needy candidates of God's grace.

Equally so, those who are locked up in prison without many rights were the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Luke 19, later in the Gospel of Luke, makes it clear.

Luke 19.10, the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. And the Gospel rips down our pride as we have to come to grips with our lostness.

[15 : 34] It's much easier for somebody in prison to understand that they have found themselves lost. They are behind bars.

They're chained up. It doesn't take too hard to allow a slave working and laboring in a field day and day and after day since birth, being traded, going here, going there.

It doesn't take long for them to realize that they are in need. And the Gospel rips down all of our pride and comes to grips with our lostness apart from Him and our utter dependence for Him.

The most successful man or woman on this earth is in the same amount of spiritual need as the poorest man or woman on earth. Grace is not merited by our accomplishments.

Grace is merited by Christ's accomplishments. Christ's accomplishments are available to all who believe, regardless of wealth, regardless of poverty, regardless of your criminal record.

[16 : 43] Jesus has qualified those who would be saved. What an amazing God to offer salvation to all who believe, even those who feel forgotten about out in a field in Tennessee.

A God who works miraculously to save those of whom He will save. And we see the account doesn't stop there in Luke. We're gonna look at the second act, the Shepherd's Encounter Act, Act 2, continuing in chapter 2, verse 16.

And it says, And they went with haste. They weren't walking. They went with haste. And found Mary and Joseph and the baby laying in a manger.

And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told to them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. You see, Mary has been privy to some information about what's going on. And this only adds to that information and a pondering heart that she had.

[18:07] But these shepherds were rewarded of being the first to see the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, the one who is described by angels in glorious terms, was found wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, just as the angels said.

And these shepherds encountered the truth of the angels' testimony, which is God's revelation to us of the good news that Jesus Christ has come.

God in the flesh has been clothed in humanity. So they went with haste to verify their sanity.

Imagine a night like that. These shepherds were called to go and see. And the call for us today, and even for slaves in the 18th century, or 19th century, is to root our lives in the very reality of what they saw just as the song sings.

Down in a lowly manger, the humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

[19:33] It's interesting because we're talking about Luke capitalizing upon themes. Look, he doesn't let us forget. Look with me in verse 18. He doesn't let us forget their lowly status because their testimony, you would imagine there'd be this big revival going on.

Wow, this is great. But look in verse 18. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds had told them. They have no voice in society. They're like, go smoke another one, right?

Shepherds like, okay, see you later. You ate the wrong mushrooms this time, right? It's similar. It's similar to those enslaved in the 1800s.

They had no voice in society. If the people enslaved within this time period would go to the public square and say, look what I have found. I have found the one who my soul longs for.

And the gospel, they'd say, yeah, go back to your field. You slave. But there's one thing society could not take away from these shepherds.

[20:47] There's one thing in society that cannot be taken away to this slave. It's the good news of great joy that has come.

The shepherds didn't know that this baby would heal a leper. Those shepherds did not know that this baby would grow up and would heal a blind man from birth.

Those shepherds did not know that this baby boy would grow up and would raise the dead. Not just kind of dead, really dead, four days dead, completely healed.

They didn't see a bloodstained cross at this time, but what they did experience was the hope of God's word. The same hope that invaded those plantations in Tennessee.

Nothing in this life can ever dull the delightful taste that salvation brings to us. Our circumstances do not have the power to redefine God's love, but God's power has the influence in our circumstances to redefine our circumstances because of who He is.

[22:09] But God's will is never redefined. His love never changes. And this church reorients our circumstances regardless if we're in bondage, regardless if we're lowly shepherds, regardless of how many zeros are in our bank account, it is for all.

And you may be sitting here banking your entire life, your entire eternity, based on salvation, upon your feelings of how you think God will address you in that time of judgment someday as all of us will be approaching.

And you might say, well, you know, I've been a good person. If that's not good enough for God, I don't know what else to do. Because you do. You do know what to do according to His Word.

You may be sitting here banking yourself upon these feelings of subjectivism, of, well, you know, I've tried this. If this isn't good enough, I hope that it is. God has given you a certainty within His Word.

of salvation. They're responding to it and following that Word, following Jesus Christ. The Gospel is a story of God redeeming lost sinners to Himself.

[23 : 31] Our lostness created a gap between us and God. And Jesus Christ died in our place to offer salvation to us by our faith alone.

alone. Not our good works. Not who we think we are. The Bible tells us who we are. We're filthy apart from Him. I look back on my life.

Yeah, I know one or two things about things that those shepherds shouldn't be eating. Because guess what? I was that guy in life. God has radically transformed me.

I know what it's like to be lost and I have come to the reality of God's grace in my own life and that is available to you today. The Gospel powerfully draws humanity to hastily come to.

Don't waste your life upon a hope that's not certain. Rest today knowing a certain hope that's secure. A hope that clings tightly to you.

[24 : 30] An anchor for your soul as the author of Hebrews states. If that's you today, if you're like, what do I need to do? I invite you to come to Jesus this morning.

To come broken. You don't have to have a lot of anything. You just have to have the eyes of faith in his word to come to Jesus Christ by faith.

And I challenge you to come speak with a pastor because we want to equip you on this journey because you should not do this alone. It's not just you in God.

It's you in God through the corporate church. And this is for your sanctification, for your good. And before you leave here, definitely see one of us.

I'm going to close with this third section, this third act that we see. Just one verse. The shepherd's response in act three. And the shepherds returned.

[25 : 40] The angels came. They went out to see the baby. They saw the baby. People wondered what they're doing, what they're saying. They left. And look, they returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

Not as they felt. Not according to their feelings or what's a popular opinion, but what? As it had been told to them.

As a response of this glorious encounter of the shepherds in Luke 2, we see the nature of salvation that God brings into our lives. It's the testimony that cannot be silenced, nor was it ever meant to be silenced.

If you're a Christian for any length of time within our gathering today, either here in person or on the live stream, this is the same compelling outcome in our lives of having seen the glory of Jesus Christ through our eyes of faith.

What has God called you to do with the special revelation that's been given to you according to his word concerning Jesus Christ?

[27 : 06] Well, the same is true for the shepherds and the same is true for a man slaving in a field in the 1800s. The same is true for us today to go and tell just as we sing, go tell it on the mountain over the hills and everywhere, go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

this song captures the compelling folk-like melody for those unlikely recipients of the gospel. The people that are like, wow, those guys are saved?

Those shepherds? That man in the field? You? Me? Trust me, there's people in my life that will laugh knowing that I'm preaching. You?

Yes. Me. This is the gospel. This is us returning, glorifying, and praising God for all that we hear and all that we have seen by our eyes of faith as it had been told to us within His word.

The call of evangelizing the world for God has little concern for our excuses. We are, we probably have pretty good excuses in here why we should not go and tell.

[28 : 35] But regardless of the compelling nature of our excuses and how much we could probably empathize with those excuses, we are without excuse if we are ignoring the call of the Holy Spirit that calls us and grips our hearts to go likewise and tell, to evangelize the world.

you could be recovering in the hospital, but God has called you. You could be a teacher within a school district and God has called you.

You could be a contractor out there feeling like a slave, out in the dirt and in the muck and sweating, but God has called you. You could be a stay-at-home mom and God has called you.

You could be unemployed and God has called you. You could be in poverty, you could be in great wealth and God has still called you. Whatever setting you find yourself in within the 168 hours that

God has given us each and every week, God has called you to return to go and tell, glorifying and praising God for all that you had heard and seen, just as you have been told. You are called where? To the mountaintops, over the hills, everywhere. And what do you tell them? The gospel.

[30 : 08] The gospel. Jesus Christ has come. Isaiah 52, 7 says, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns.

You and me? You better believe it. You and me. 1 Corinthians 1, 27 informs us that God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. He's been doing this for a long time. And he has called each and every one of us.

We are qualified by God's grace to have the honorable privilege to be ambassadors of the good news of Jesus Christ. And the news that God became a man, he lived perfectly, he died substitutionarily, he rose victoriously, and offers the world salvation through their faith in him. And many of us, I think, may be sitting here today just clouded by the issues within the world, thinking that, does the world even care about this anymore?

[31 : 42] It's such irrelevance. Everyone kind of is all about just you do you, I'll do me. Good vibes is the theme and the answer.

And if you have a message that offends someone else, you know, just keep your mouth shut, just you do you, right? We might think that this is irrelevant to the world, as if they don't care about what we have to say.

I would like to beg to differ. Do you know what the top five search inquiries worldwide, according to a study published by Google this week, what are people searching for worldwide this year? Number one, what is marriage? Number two, what is dating? Number three, what is a person? Number four, who is the president? I think there's some who still are trying to figure that out. And number five, listen, who is God?

[33 : 04] I even went back and checked. I did a little filter of this search. And within the last hour, 60 minutes of me putting this message together within the last hour, this question, who is God, still was in the top ten worldwide.

Everything that the world is searching for, marriage, relationships, identity of human beings, who God is, we can't help with the president, but we know the one who has pointed the president and who is over the president.

Amen? It's within our hands. We cling to this truth.

We hold fast to the truth and we go and tell, regardless of our excuse of refraining from doing so. This means it doesn't take Google to answer the questions that the world is already asking. It calls the church to acknowledge the needs of the world and take actions of vessels of hope to a Googling and searching curious world.

[34 : 16] May the words of this song, go tell on the mountain, be the anthem upon our lives to rise up and to take action to the proclamation of the gospel.

Go tell it. What? Tell what? The good news of Jesus Christ upon the mountain. let people just sense it coming and overflowing from your lips and your life through your words and deeds.

We are without excuse and this unknown individual of the 19th century in Tennessee was bound to shackles and made it true.

Those shepherds that had the same testimony of what God had revealed to them is the same for them too. The cliché saying is absolutely true and it says for us to bloom where God has planted us because the world needs to hear about Jesus Christ.

You are missionaries to the kingdom of God. Time to get busy. And I hope that this year coming up in 2022 is one that's marked in going and telling.

[35 : 36] Let's pray as we close our time today. Thank you.