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# Narrative Lectionary

Year 3 | The Year of Luke

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## Scripture Readings

### December 24, 2020

*Christmas Eve*

#### **.....** **About the text**

**T**HERE WERE SHEPHERDS LIVING in the fields. They were keeping watch over their flocks by night.

We could be horridly meticulous about describing every detail of what it meant to be a shepherd in the hills surrounding Bethlehem two thousand years ago. How dark, how chilly, how smelly, how lonely, how dangerous...

We flock on Christmas Eve to hear preachers and choristers draw the setting for us, always with the hopeful coda: Of all the places God's Son could have been born, God chose a stable, and for witnesses God chose lowly shepherds.

They're always "lowly." They're always "not us."

And we walk away from shepherds and sheep, from fecund aromas and scratchy straw, wanting to identify with the precious gifts to follow.

In a year when everything outside our doorstep is "not us," stay with the shepherds, just for a bit.



## Luke 2:1-20

1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the

1 About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. <sup>2</sup> This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. <sup>5</sup> He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

6 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

8 There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. <sup>10</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: <sup>11</sup> A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. <sup>12</sup> This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

13 At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

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heavenly host, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”<sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.<sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;<sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.<sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.<sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## The Message

14 Glory to God in the heavenly heights, · Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

15 As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.”<sup>16</sup> They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.<sup>17</sup> Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child.<sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

19 Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself.<sup>20</sup> The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they’d been told!

## Psalm 96

1 O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols but the LORD made the heavens.

1 Sing GOD a brand-new song! · Earth and everyone in it, sing!

2 Sing to GOD—worship GOD!

Shout the news of his victory from sea to sea, ·<sup>3</sup> Take the news of his glory to the lost, · News of his wonders to one and all!

4 For GOD is great, and worth a thousand Hallelujahs. · His terrible beauty makes the gods look cheap; ·<sup>5</sup> Pagan gods are mere tatters and rags.

GOD made the heavens—<sup>6</sup> Royal

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6 Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

9 Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

10 Say among the nations, "The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; <sup>12</sup> let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy <sup>13</sup> before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. · He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

## The Message

splendor radiates from him, · A powerful beauty sets him apart.

7 Bravo, GOD, Bravo! · Everyone join in the great shout: Encore! · In awe before the beauty, in awe before the might.

8 Bring gifts and celebrate,

9 Bow before the beauty of GOD, · Then to your knees—everyone worship!

10 Get out the message—GOD Rules! · He put the world on a firm foundation; · He treats everyone fair and square.

11 Let's hear it from Sky, · With Earth joining in, · And a huge round of applause from Sea.

12 Let Wilderness turn cart-wheels, · Animals, come dance, · Put every tree of the forest in the choir—

13 An extravaganza before GOD as he comes, · As he comes to set everything right on earth, · Set everything right, treat everyone fair.

The Narrative Lectionary presents the story of God's work in humanity through a single Gospel each year. This is Year 3: The Year of Luke.