

Sermon for December 24, 2014
Christmas Eve

Tonight God keeps the promise made so long ago; first to Adam and Eve then to Abraham then to King David and now to Mary; a promise for a Savior. We hear in Mary's song to Elizabeth about the child she is to bear; "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors."

And in hearing that song we shouldn't be surprised that it was the lowly shepherds to which the angels first appeared to announce the Savior's birth. Yes, they are the outcasts of society—they are always unclean, both inside and outside. There was a line in our Christmas program this year uttered by the Innkeeper: "I won't have your kind in here!" But they are the ones to whom the angels appear. Caesar Augustus—the self-proclaimed son of god didn't have angels appear to him. The wise men didn't have angels appear to them. King Herod and the Pharisees didn't have angels appear to them.

But the shepherds, the outcasts of society, received thousands of the heavenly hosts singing praises to God! And after the angels told them the good news; there was no debate, no questioning, no fear; they left their sheep immediately to find the babe in Bethlehem of whom the angels spoke. When they found him they told anyone who would listen and even those who wouldn't about what they had seen and heard. They didn't care what people thought of them—they had seen God's promised Messiah!

Maybe there have been times in your life when you've been the outcast; maybe it's even tonight. Sometimes it begins with the "if onlys." You know: if only we had more money; if only we were thinner; if only we were better at sports; if only we were smarter; if only we had someone special to love us; if only, if only, if only. Are you hearing the "if onlys?" If you are then I have good news for you; for tonight God says to us that we do have someone special to love us;

someone who loves us enough to redeem us from our sins and to die for us giving us everlasting life!

To **you** is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. A son has been given to us; authority rests on his shoulders and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace; for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all; giving himself for us that he might redeem us from all sin. Amen!