

Go Tell it on the Mountain

Isaiah 52:7; Luke 2:8-20

Opening: Merry Christmas! This is the once every 7 years Christmas/Lord's Day combination. Sometimes it happens every 11 years and every 6 years depending on how the leap year day falls. I hope you got everything you wanted for Christmas. My kids got me a gift-card to Chickfila so that I can take them and buy them milkshakes. April got a new battery in her van for Christmas because it died this week. We believe in practical gifts. **There is a joy in giving presents during the Christmas season.** Parents love to take pictures of their kids' faces when they get a present that they always wanted but didn't expect to get. Sometimes our phones don't work right, or we forget to hit record so you have the kids re-enact their excitement as they open up their presents so you can share it on social media. As humans we love to share with others fun experiences and good news. ***In a world full of bad news, we need to share the good news of Jesus Christ.***

Context: The Christmas song we are talking about today is *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. We do not know exactly who wrote it, but it was a spiritual song sang by slaves in the south and was likely composed between 1840-1860. It became famous on Christmas due to John Wesley Work. He introduced it in Nashville Tennessee in 1907. The chorus of the song is a call to, "Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born." It is based on two passages Isaiah 52:7 and Luke 2. It also connects to the Great Commission that Jesus gave to all believers to share the gospel with everyone, everywhere. **3 questions:** *Who is to tell, what are they to tell and where should they tell?*

I. Who is to tell?

- ***While shepherds kept their watching over silent flocks by night:*** the slave who wrote this song felt drawn to the story of the shepherds. Shepherds in Jesus' day were the lowest class of people in Jewish society and were considered to be poor, uneducated, and weird. Even today the Bedouin shepherds are seen to be strange.
- **Our nativities are romanticized with people wanting to be shepherds in cool outfits, sashes, and bandanas.** I always wanted to be a shepherd when I was a kid in the nativity. But in Jesus' day, they were basically homeless people who were always dirty, made very little money and smelled awful. They stayed up all night in the cold with the sheep. They were often alone, and their best friends were sheep. They weren't considered respectable citizens because they had to work 7 days a week and didn't attend synagogue on the Sabbath.
- **The shepherds were the least likely to be the first to receive the greatest news the world had ever heard:** Why did they get it first? To demonstration of the nature of the gospel. In coming to the shepherds, God reached to those that everyone considered to be on the bottom. Showing that there is no one too broken, too poor, too dirty, too insignificant, or too unwanted for His Kingdom.
- ***What was the message of Christmas? "FEAR NOT! I have GOOD NEWS of Great JOY!"*** Joy comes from having a right relationship with God: God and sinners reconciled. Fear comes from sin and from a broken relationship with God. The news that the angels brought was not the fear of judgement but the joy of salvation. God is not against you, but God is for you, and He has come to be with you so that you can be with Him forever.
- **For all PEOPLE:** the crack head, sleepy head, meat head, knuckle head: **This news is for you!** These shepherds came into the First Christmas not feeling like their lives were awesome, they were outcasts and weird, yet they are the one that God chose to first hear the good news of Jesus. The news of God's favor for those who don't deserve it.
- **Comparison game:** we often compare ourselves to others and say, "Compared to that person (Hitler) I am pretty good." Or "I've better than so and so, therefore, I am entitled to God's loving me. I can earn it." Some of you come from a Catholic background where you think that you need to be "good enough" or "be worthy" of God's love.
- **The question is not:** *How good do I have to be to earn God's favor? (Scale of good and bad) But rather, do I realize that I am so bad that I can never, ever earn God's favor on my own?* Only those who come to the place where they realize that they do not deserve and are not entitled to God's grace and forgiveness, are those who can receive it.

II. What are we to tell?

- ***Down in a lowly manger, our humble Christ was born and brought to us salvation that blessed Christmas morn:*** the hymn focuses on the good news of God's promised salvation and relief from suffering. As slaves, they lived in a terrible world and they knew that the birth of Jesus Christ would usher in a new world in which sin, suffering and slave-masters would no longer reign over them. Jesus came to make everything right again.
- **Hear the Message of the Angels: 2:10: Unto you is born a Savior:** Not a politician, not a military general, not an economist, not an educator, not an actor, but a SAVIOR: to save us from our misery, our shame, abuse, broken lives, and world. He came to reverse the curse of our lives and this world forever.

- **The Angels break out in Song: 2:14: Glory to God in the highest and on Earth peace among those with who He is pleased:** Jesus came to bring us peace with God, peace with each other and peace on earth. It is the good news of a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ that leads to a right relationship with everything else. Until you have a right relationship with God you will never be able to a great relationship with other people.
- **God did not send Jesus to come and die for the sins of Angels:** angels that sinned against God were immediately condemned and cast out for eternity from God's presence. Yet, God sends Jesus so that humanity could be saved from their sins. It's such a gracious act of God, that the angels in heaven can't even comprehend such love of God.
- **The Angels Long to Look at this Salvation of God for Man: 1 Peter 1:12** "things into which angels long to look." The angels who saw God create the universe and see his face every single day, long to look more deeply into the wonder of God's grace and the gospel. **Piper:** *Unfallen angels understand experientially the righteousness and holiness of God, but they have no experience of what it's like to have sinned and been forgiven. If they sin, they're judged eternally, but God in the gospel is merciful to mankind. The angels recognize how precious and significant the gospel is. And instead of responding with envy or questions, they respond with curiosity and worship.*
- **VS. 16-20: The shepherds went to where Jesus was and when they saw Him they were forever changed:** they heard the message of Christmas and responded to it personally. They went to where Jesus was and had a personal experience with Him and then they went told everyone about it.
- **The message of Christmas must be received before it can be shared:** I'm afraid that many have heard the message of Christmas, but it hasn't really sunk into their lives. They categorize it as a nice story, nostalgic, mythology or a fairy tale. Or they have heard it so many times that it means nothing to them at all. But this message is the power of God to transform your life, forgive you of all your sins, remove all your guilt and shame and give you peace.

III. Where should they tell it?

- **Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills and everywhere:** The command of the song and the scripture is those who have been saved by the gospel are tasked to share the gospel with others over the hills and everywhere: **(Acts 1:8)** the gospel that the angels are in awe of. Those who have received the grace of God are to share it with others. *Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where they found bread.*
- **We are just no bodies telling everybody about Somebody who can save anybody.** *If the good news is that there is no one too lowly for God to pursue, no one so insignificant for God to overlook, no one too guilty that God will forsake, no one so broken that God can not fix; no one so sick that God can not heal, no one so lost that God can not find, then we need to go tell that message to everyone, everywhere.*
- **Isaiah 52:7** *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."*
- **Mountains in ancient Israel:** most cities in the Middle East were settled between mountains. When the people in the town were waiting for good news, they would look towards the mountains or the big hill because that would be the first place you could see the messenger coming. If a battle or war was won, the messenger would carry a flag and would shout out the news on the mountains so that everyone in the city would see and hear the good news.
- **In ancient Israel, if you have good news to tell, you go and tell it on the mountain so that everyone, everywhere, can see it and hear it.** Isaiah imagines groups of people scattered all over the world waiting, overwhelmed, and scared of death, without hope. Then a messenger comes with good news of happiness and announces, *"The battle is over, the King has won, and the Kingdom is restored."*
- **Because of Christmas morning, Good Friday, and the Empty tomb on Easter we have good news to share with everybody, everywhere: THE BATTLE IS OVER, OUR KING HAS WON, OUR GOD REIGNS:** we have been set free and we need to get the news out to everyone, everywhere to Jesus has conquered and they can be saved.
- **The population of the world is now over 8 billion, it is estimated that 157,690 die daily without Jesus Christ:** one every 1.8 seconds; in countries with less than 2% evangelical: Russia, 4,080, in Japan 3,343, in Germany 2,072, in Somalia 236, Vietnam 113, Yemen 165, die daily without Christ. There are people all over SWFL who need Jesus.
- **Romans 10:13-15,17** *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*
- **They won't believe until they hear, and they won't hear until we tell, and we won't tell unless we GO!** Some of you are sitting around waiting for God to give you some special feeling down your spine or receive some experience in church before you tell someone about Jesus.

- **Hear the words of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army:** *“Not called!’ did you say? ‘Refuse to hear the call,’ I think you should say. Just put your ear down to the Bible and hear him bid you go and pull sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitiful wail for help. Go stand by the gates of hell and hear the damned entreat you to go back to their father’s house and warn their brothers and sisters not to come there. And then look Christ in the face, whose mercy you have professed to obey, and tell him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish his mercy to the world.”*
- **All who have been saved have been called to go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere that Jesus Christ has come, He has conquered, and He can save:** *Whom have you told? Who are you telling? Who do you need to tell? People are a lot more interested in hearing the gospel than we are sharing the gospel.*

Application: Can you imagine that it would have been like in Argentina when they heard and saw that they won the World Cup last Sunday? Did you see the video footage in Buenos Aires Argentina after the World Cup victory? ([Video](#)) There was an estimated 4 million people in the streets celebrating and cheering the victory of the Argentina team.

As I looked at that drone footage, it reminded me of a greater celebration in heaven. One day all those who have been saved from everywhere throughout history will be celebrating, shouting, and praising our CHAMPION KING JESUS.

Revelation 7:9-10 *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

Everyone who is in that Revelation 7:9 vision is there because someone told them about Jesus.

The greatest Christmas gift you can receive is Jesus. The greatest gift you can give is Jesus.

Our vision is for God to use us to do greater things in reaching and raising up the next generation. We can only see God do greater things in our church when we are obedient to His calling in our lives to: PRAYING, GIVING AND GOING!