

## **Gifted**

### ***Have You Thought Much about the Christmas Shepherds?***

Many sermons have been shared about the shepherds and the way God presented to them the announcement of the birth of the Christ. I have often spoken of that spectacular moment and their reaction to the news. This time, I would just like to focus on one particular aspect of that momentous hour and how it impacts you. **In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.** (Luke 2: 8-11 CSB) It is quite fascinating that there is a rather peculiar bit of wording to the revelation. “...a Savior was born for you...” We don’t speak that way of the birth of children. We never think of a baby not connected to us, not a part of our own family that way. A baby is born perhaps for the parents or even the siblings and maybe the grandparents or aunts and uncles but not for total strangers. It is a peculiar way of putting it and quite intentional. My most memorable Christmas gift arrived Christmas Eve. I was a five year old playing in our living room and suddenly I heard loud stomping on the porch and a hearty, “Ho, ho, ho”. A bit scared, I was encouraged by my mom to go out on the porch and see what it was. There, all by itself was a shiny new little bike. Now that is a typical Christmas present. A baby given to complete strangers is not normal and yet that is what it says. A Savior was born for you!

This was in fact the first gift given on Christmas, before even the Magi brought their gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is the foundation of all Christmas gift giving, the theological basis for it. We give, not because of St. Nick, the Magi or anyone else who has ever given gifts. We give because God gave to the shepherds a Savior. Because He gives to you a Savior. So what is a Savior exactly? Of course, the Savior is the One who brings salvation. Which leads us to the question behind the question. What is salvation? This is the gift of God, the gift that transcends all gifts. But what is it? Suppose someone gave you a matryoshka doll from Russia but you didn’t know what it was! You never bothered to open it. You enjoyed its pretty exterior but never saw what was inside. Salvation is like that for most people. They don’t know what to expect from it. They don’t explore its depth and never realize how vast it is.

Let me share just a few thoughts about salvation and being given a Savior. Salvation means God being in you and living through you. You have the mind of Christ to give you direction and empower you to have joy and peace even when it gets rough. Your sins are forgiven and eventually all the damage sin has caused your personality will be removed and you will be free of the power sin has over you. You have heaven before you, a home that is perfect in every way that lasts forever. Here is what intrigues me most about being given a Savior. Jesus Christ is a real live person, not an idea, not a mythological figure, not an AI generated ideal. He is a living, breathing friend who loves you and will never stop loving you or being with you. From the moment you are given a Savior, you have Jesus with you, and He loves you. This Christmas, take some time to just be with Jesus and enjoy the gift you have of Him.

We must close by making this final point. At great cost a Savior is given to you! It cost the Father His Son and the horrific pain suffered as Jesus died for your sins. It cost Jesus the terrible torture of the beatings and finally the agonizing and slow death on the cross. We receive the gift of a Savior because it came at a cost you could never cover; a price you will never be able to earn. For you, Jesus gave all He had to be your Savior and on this day before Christmas, we can do nothing but in gratitude be thankful that the great gift of salvation is ours and in humble adoration give thanks for such a Savior.