

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Luke 2:8

How common is common? Who is common? What is common? Who is important in the world? Who makes a difference? Are the whodunits, the kings, the presidents, the supreme hooahs really the ones who control the world? Who is common really?

In reading Luke's account of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, I started "sailing through" the chapter two. By the grace of God, my attention was arrested by little verse 8 (see above).

By itself, that little verse seems so innocuous, doesn't it? How many times have you heard it read, sometimes in a droning voice by someone who sounding like they could care less; sometimes with great fervor. It could easily be passed over as "fill" material to get to the Big News of Jesus' birth. But why is this in the Scriptures at all? Were not all of these men "commoners?" Indeed they were. In one way. But in another way, not at all.

Let's put this little verse into context with the rest of the Scriptures. Here was the state of affairs the night these shepherds get mentioned in the Scriptures.



1. Caesar Augustus was the emperor of Rome. Having conquered the world of that day, the Roman Empire counted Israel among its states. Thus these Shepherds were living in an occupied country.
2. A fellow named Quirinius was the Governor of Syria. (just north and slightly east of Israel.)
3. The King of Judea was Herod. He built a temple in Jerusalem which was the one Jesus went to often.
4. Judea also had a governor whose name I don't know. He was a patsy for the Roman Emperor, and was chosen to govern on behalf of Rome and do what the Romans wanted. (later on Pontius Pilate took on that role.)
5. Life was really hard in those days. All the garments for the Jewish priests were kept under lock and key by the Roman authorities, and religious leaders of the day had to get permission "to have church." I don't know how "church attendance" at large was; I do know there were a few old folks who really fasted and prayed a bunch for the Messiah to come..... Two of them are named in the Gospels; an old lady named Anna and an old man named Simeon.

6. One of the priests who served in the temple during those days was a man named Zacharias. He was from the order of Abijah, one of some 24 divisions of priests that King David had set up. He was kind of an ordinary man. Included among the facts of his life was that he and his wife couldn't have kids until God intervened directly. Because of unbelief about this happening, Zacharias gets muted by God for 9 months, and then after his child was born (who turned out to be a boy whom he named John), he (John) grew up to be most peculiar by even today's standards.

7. There was also a couple who were engaged to be married who came up with a really unique problem: the bride-to-be became pregnant and claimed that the child's father was God Himself. This couple named their baby Jesus.

I find it easy to imagine that the world of Israel in those days was tough, busy, uncomfortable. I think it might have been somewhat like life today. With the exception of not being physically occupied by an enemy nation, much of the angst this nation knows today is not unlike that day and time.

Add to that that the Emperor of Rome decided to have a census which required that every family in the Roman empire return to their tribal hometown. What a mess. What a mess indeed.

And it was in THIS very mess that Jesus Christ, God made visible, God Incarnate made His debut in our world. When Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph were caught in the census dealie – that is why they weren't home in Nazareth where she could get some decent care. Not only was there not one single place for them to spend the night(s) in Bethlehem (King David's hometown, because Joseph was related to David), but Mary had to make the trip to Bethlehem while she was full-term with this pregnancy! Yes, times were hard!

So – among untold thousands of other people then, we know of the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, trying to raise their little Johnny in a less than perfect time, Herod strutting up and down everywhere, Quirinius up in Syria, Ceasar Augustus trying to hang onto his kingdom, old Anna and Simeon, just as unknown as could be, praying their hearts out night and day in church. And then you have our friends in Luke 2:8. Let's look again at what we are told:

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How in the world did these shepherds “make it” into the Biblical record? This is amazing to consider. They weren't in some lottery to have front-seat tickets to be the first humans beside his earthly parents to actually set eyes on the very Messiah of the whole earth. What made them so special? I am wonderstruck by this:

The shepherds were first of all shepherds. They had a flock to tend. It wasn't Donald Trump's flock, and so far as we know, it wasn't King Herod's flock either. It was just a flock. But it was theirs to tend. THEY KNEW THEY WERE SHEPHERDS, AND THEY WERE SHEPHERDING THEIR FLOCKS!

Beyond that, they were (according to the New King James Translation) “living out in the fields. ”They must have pulled night-time duty. Maybe they were 24-7 in those fields! We can

ascertain from the Scriptures that these fellows were dedicated to their little flock. If you are willing to perform your job, your ministry, day and night, if you are willing to even LIVE out in the fields with your flock, you are one good shepherd.

The last thing I noticed is that they watched their flocks **by night**. Night time. When revelers are either partying or sleeping in comfort on a nice bed in a warm place. Night time. When the whole earth sleeps. These guys were keeping watch. They were faithful with the one coin which had been entrusted to them.

Many times in the Scriptures, the phrase “in the night” or similar wording is used to refer to a time of suffering, a time of darkness, a time of abandonment, or a time of testing. How wonderful to consider that these forever-unnamed shepherds were so faithfully keeping their night watch.

So what can be learned here? Oh, the applications are many and wonderful!

1. It was to these dear souls that God sent an angel of the Lord to speak to them.
2. It was to these men that the very glory of God shined brightly all around them!
3. It was to these faithful “little people” the angel said, “
 - a. **“Don’t be afraid!”**
 - b. (sic) **“I bring you fabulous news!”**
 - c. **“The Messiah has been born in Bethlehem!”**
 - d. (sic) **“(You’ll know who it is when you go because) ... You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger!”**
4. It was to these very same commoners that

SUDDENLY THERE WAS – WITH THE ANGEL – A MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST (zillions of angels) PRAISING GOD AND SAYING, (SINGING)

**GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST,
AND ON EARTH PEACE,
GOODWILL TOWARD MEN!” (v.14**

It was at that point that they left their post. I have wondered many times how they did it. It is hard to believe that they abandoned their flocks. I doubt they did. Yet the Scriptures say they came (I love that phrase – “they came”!) **with haste** and they found Mary – and Joseph – and the Babe – lying in a manger. v. 16

Thought it does not say so, I believe they worshipped Him. We do know what they did when they left that manger:

“...they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all thos who heard *marveled* at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”
v.18

So who’s a commoner? If it means being like the shepherds of Luke 2:8, I want to be common.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Father, in the country in which you have placed me, I want to be a faithful little shepherd.

Father, I want to live out in the fields with the flock you have given me.

Father, I choose to watch over the flock you’ve given me.

Father, I will shepherd those you’ve given me by night and by day.

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THE ANGELS' SONG AND THE SHEPHERDS' VISIT

Father, open up the heavens with one of Your “Suddenlies!”
Break over me the blessed good tidings of our Redeemer King!

Father, breathe upon me, and let Your glory surround me!

Father, let me run with haste and tell everyone I can find how wondrous Your Son is!