



Scripture: Luke 2:8-9, 20; Matthew 2:1-2, 12

Key Point: The people included in the Nativity scene show God’s heart for inclusivity of the gospel. Because of Jesus, we are invited into God’s family no matter who we are, what we have done, or where we come from.

INTRO

Have you ever felt left out before? I think we all have in some way or another.

[Author note: include a personal anecdote about a time when you felt excluded.]

I remember a specific instance when I felt this in high school. I used to play on a travel softball team during the school softball off-season. I lived in a town near the city, but all of the good softball teams were out in the “country,” as we said. A couple times a week, I would drive out to the more rural areas of Alabama and practice and play softball with a group of girls who were from that area.

Unfortunately, I had a good bit of trouble fitting in on this team. At one of the first practices, one of the girls came to practice bragging about the fact that she had been expelled from her school earlier that day. One of the girls warming up next to me asked me what the weather was going to be like, and I responded to her that “the forecast predicted rain later.”

She immediately scoffed at me and told me I better stop using fancy city talk around her unless I wanted my teammates to think that I thought I was better than them. So, what did I do? I wanted to fit in, so I trained myself to talk a little slower and use a lot smaller words. But then something else strange happened. My friends at school started asking why I had such a southern accent or why my voice had changed so much. They thought I was starting to sound less intelligent. It was so odd. I didn’t quite fit in in either place.

DIGGING DEEPER

I think in some way or another, we have all felt this way: like we don't quite fully fit in anywhere. Today, we are going to explore what the birth of Jesus says about this. We will explore how Jesus' birth calls all of us to come to Him. It shows that we are all included. We are going to look at the characters in Jesus' birth narrative to see how truly all are invited to come to Him.

Luke 2:8-9 NLT

⁸ That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified,

If you've grown up hearing this story, you've read these verses so often that it's easy to glaze over them. But let's really think about it. Imagine yourself as a shepherd. Every night, you take the same sheep out to the field to eat grass and do whatever sheep do, and then you take them back inside.

It was just an ordinary night: the shepherds were doing their normal routine, when all of a sudden, an angel appeared to them. God turned the boring and ordinary into something absolutely holy. It should also be noted that being a shepherd was not exactly the most glamorous job to have. Shepherds were normally less educated and were certainly not considered to have a high status. Yet, according to the biblical narrative, these shepherds were among the first ones to be told that Jesus was born and the first ones to be invited to go see Him. Plus, they were visited by holy beings: angels.

What is God saying to us through this story? Why were the shepherds such an important part of the Christmas story? I think that God made a really important statement by making the shepherds such an integral, celebrated part of this story. He shows us that no one has to have a certain intelligence level or social status to be invited into the Kingdom of God and