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## **The Original Songs of Christmas: The Angels' Song**

Luke 2:8-14

*<sup>8</sup>And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the LORD appeared to them, and the glory of the LORD shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the LORD. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

### The Setting of the Angels' Song

They came to the shepherds. Shepherds were despised by the orthodox people. Even David had been looked down on because he was a shepherd. They were not able to go to synagogue because they were considered to be "unclean".

And yet the lambs they so carefully and lovingly tended and raised, the perfect ones were destined for temple sacrifice. Without the shepherds they would have had no sacrificial lambs. By coming to them – the Angels and God was saying that the gospel story is for everyone – from

the least of them. God put them first in revealing his son, the way he would choose a woman to reveal the resurrection.

It was also typical that when a boy of that day was born, musicians would gather to play and sing. Jesus being born in another town, in a stable, those arrangements could not be made – so the angels from heaven provided the music.

The Angels was not for an earthly ruler, but for God, maker of heaven and earth, who chose to reveal his glory in a manger and stable.

### The Words of the Angels' Song

The song they sing is called the Gloria in Excelsis Deo, which is Latin for, “**Gloria to God in the Highest.**” The angels were messengers from God. Isaiah teaches us that angels are constantly recognizing the glory and majesty of God and giving praise to God simply for who he is.

The second part: Once the Angels have the shepherd's attention, shepherds who were very much afraid of them. The Angel says, “**Do not be afraid. I bring you good tidings that will cause great joy for all people.**” Fear is not the response God is looking for here. It is joy. Today is the Sunday of joy and in many churches the liturgical color is pink for joy. In older times Advent was a time of repentance and self-examination just like Lent – hence the purple color. But the third week is a change to joy and then to love. The fasting was broken, and joy reigned.

The third part of the angel message' after glorifying God and calming the shepherd so they could really hear what was about to be said, is when the angel is sharing instructions as to why they had come. **Today is born in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord.** Wow! The shepherds must have been stunned. Christ means Messiah, and everyone knew about the Messiah that was foretold, wow!

The fourth part of the message is the choir of angels singing **Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.**

In those days of the Roman Empire, poets and priests would declare the coming peace and prosperity as a new emperor was about to be crowned.

But from heaven comes the greatest of all news: joy and peace and salvation from death – not coming from institutions or government leaders, but from God through the birth of a Savior, Christ the Lord. – God with us.

One European monarch used to dress like a common person and go into the marketplaces of his city to observe and get to know the people. He said, “How can I rule over my people if I do not know how they live.”

God became flesh and walk incognito as a baby into our world and into our lives. He knows what it is to be hungry, cold, helpless. He knows what it is to be grieved and in deep pain. He knows betrayal and suffering. He knows how it feels to be hated. He knows what it is to die in pain.

Those last words of the angel chorus about peace on earth good will to all. Are most precious to us in the world we live in today. Our world is darkened by a pandemic and large numbers of death and loss. Their words came to poor, mistreated shepherds. Many in our world can relate. But they also foreshadow Jesus’ words. As recorded by John in his gospel we would hear Jesus saying, “Peace, I give.... but not as the world gives.”

The angel’s words reaffirm that God’s favor rests on humankind. That God is not ashamed to leave his throne and become one of us, so he understands us. And he gives himself a face we can look upon and

picture in our prayers, Jesus. He chooses to be approachable in the form of a baby. Who doesn't love a baby?

Today in great joy, praise God with the angels, and by their instruction substitute Joy for fear in our lives. And as they directed the shepherds, go to the manger, find the baby Jesus, and place Him deep in our hearts, finding peace and good will toward all.

Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay, close by me forever, and love me I pray. Bless all the dear children in thy tender care and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.