

The first witnesses



■ READ: A selection from Luke 2:6-21

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ... So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

■ REFLECT:

Into the darkness of that dank stable, a child is born. Into the darkness of the world, a light shines. From the knotty, gnarled stump of Jesse, a shoot springs up.

This is it. *To you is born this day a Savior. A Savior!*

The waiting is over. Hope is here. This is the olive branch in the beak of Noah's dove, the confirmation that all is not lost. Life will flourish again.

And who gets to witness it? Who gets the privilege of being called over to see the solitary green shoot, so fresh it hasn't yet unfurled?

The shepherds.

Not the clean, charismatic professionals with access to big marketing budgets and platforms to publicize the news. Just a shabby bunch of shepherds. Maybe it's because they share the vocation of the one who was just born; like him, they tend and guide a dim-witted flock, prone to wandering. Maybe they're more likely to rejoice in his birth rather than feel threatened by it. Maybe they understand best of all what his coming means.

And guess what: today, you're among those shepherds. You get to hear the news, to be a witness. You're invited to the birthing room of Jesus. You're sent back to glorify and praise God for all you've heard and seen.

What a privilege! Cherish it. Go see the Savior and come back singing.

■ PRAY:

Welcome, Jesus! How thrilled and grateful I am that you willingly entered into the darkness of the world to bring your light and life. The life you bring is just the beginning of a whole new creation in your Spirit. I can't wait to see what's yet to come. Amen.