

## Morning Overview

**Lesson:** *Advent: Joy – The King Brings Joy!*

### Lesson Objective:

Today marks the third Sunday in Advent and our theme for this morning is joy. Since Genesis 3, all of humanity has longed and expected the Messiah to come and make things right again. Throughout the Old Testament we see the expectation for a King to come, even when things were going right for the Hebrew people, it always ended in disappointment (King David and Solomon). But the promised One is here! The King has arrived not in might or in strength, but in gentleness and humility. This wasn't the kind of King most people know. This week, we read about the angel's announcement to the shepherds, and in the announcement, is a clue to what the birth of Jesus means for all people: Great joy! The King has come, and his arrival means joy for all who turn to Him!

### Teaching Summary:

- God always keeps His promises.
- Nothing is impossible with God.
- All of the Old Testament has been waiting for the King to come. The Hebrew people had been waiting for over 400 years to hear from God.
- Everyone has set their hope on this King to make the world right again – to make it work properly – that all the sad and terrible things, he would make them go away.
- With Jesus's birth, great joy has come. Jesus is the joy for all people everywhere if only they will turn and trust Him.
- Mary, Jesus' mother, was engaged to a man named Joseph. Mary and Joseph were not married, and Mary had never been a mother before.
- Jesus was the King everyone had been waiting on and He would rule forever.
- Jesus came from heaven.
- Jesus was Mary's firstborn son. He was born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

**Scripture:** Luke 2:1-20

**Story:** Gospel Story Book Bible, pages 160-161; Jesus Story Book Bible, 176-191

**Scripture Memory for Advent:** Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**Craft:** Sheep

**Supplies:** Cardstock sheep, pipe cleaner, cotton balls, verse sticker, glue, crayons/markers

**Instructions:**

1. Have children draw face on sheep.
2. Glue cotton to sheep.
3. Shape pipe cleaner into a shepherd's staff and attach to back of sheep with verse sticker.



## Story

### Historical setting

The Bible says once there was a man named Caesar Augustus. He was a very important man in the Roman government – he was in charge of his kingdom. Caesar Augustus made a law. He said, “I want to take a census.” That means he wanted to count the people. Caesar Augustus wanted to know how many people lived in his kingdom. Caesar Augustus said, “Everybody must go back to the city where they were born and register” (That means write their name down.)

### Journey to Bethlehem

There was another man. His name was Joseph. Joseph lived in Nazareth. He was a very nice man. But Joseph had been born in Bethlehem, not Nazareth. And so, when Caesar Augustus said, “Go back to the town where you were born,” off to Bethlehem Joseph went. He would write his name down there. Mary went with him to Bethlehem. She was going to be his wife.

But there was something very special about Mary, the Bible says she was going to have a little baby. Remember God had sent an angel named Gabriel to give Mary that good news! The angel had even said she would have a baby boy and she was to name him Jesus. Nazareth wasn't too far from Bethlehem but remember there were no trains or cars or anything like that. So, Mary and kind Joseph had to walk or ride on a donkey. It was a hard trip. When somebody's going to have a baby, they can't walk really fast or anything like that. So, I bet Mary rode on the donkey. Maybe Joseph rode on one too or maybe he just walked next to Mary. But it took a long time and I bet they were very, very tired and I bet they were very, very happy when they finally saw the little town of Bethlehem off in the distance. “It won't be long, now,” Mary probably thought. “Soon we'll be in Bethlehem.” (sound relieved)

### Humble birth

The Bible says when Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem they found an inn. An inn is like a hotel where people sleep when they're not close to their own house. I bet Mary couldn't wait to put her head down and rest. But you know what...it didn't work out that way. Remember I told you that Caesar Augustus said everybody had to go to the town where they were born to register? Well, lots of people had come to Bethlehem and the city was so crowded. There were people everywhere. When Mary and Joseph got to the inn, the man in charge said, “There's no more room. The inn is all full!” (Look sad) Poor Mary, poor Joseph. Where would they rest? Maybe the man in charge of the inn showed Mary and Joseph a stable nearby. We don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us that. But it does say that Mary and Joseph found a stable where they could spend the night. But you know what? People don't usually sleep in stables. (chuckle) Animals do! So, stables aren't usually very nice. They're not very clean that's for sure. You know how animals eat!! They always make big messes! Stables usually don't smell too good either. But it was a place to rest. And Mary was so tired. Remember (whisper)...she was going to have a baby!

When Mary and Joseph were in that city called Bethlehem, staying in that little stable, the most exciting thing happened that has ever happened in the whole world. Mary had a baby. She had a baby boy. God had sent his very own Son. Mary took her little baby boy and wrapped him in pieces of cloth. (If you have a doll and an old white sheet, torn in pieces, you may want to demonstrate as you tell this part of the story by wrapping strips of cloth around the baby). Then she laid him down in the manger. A manger is where animals eat! You know how your dog or kitty have a bowl where they eat their food from, well a manger is where cows and donkeys and horses and animals like that can get their food. Joseph might have cleaned all the animals' food out of the manger and I bet he bent down and found some fresh straw and put it all in the bottom of that manger. He probably made it as soft as he could. Then Mary laid her sweet baby right in the manger. Mary's baby was warm and all cuddly. Mary named her baby Jesus. God had chosen that name. Mary did just what the angel, Gabriel, had told her to do.

## **The Baby**

Baby Jesus looked like other babies. He was probably cute and all wiggly and he probably cried too. He sure didn't look like God, born right there in that dirty stable, sleeping in that manger. But you know what boys and girls, He was. That baby was God's very own Son. Jesus had wanted to come down to earth to live for a while. He wanted to live here just like we do. Now God had come near to people. They could see him. They could touch him. This little baby was Mary's baby, but he was also the Son of the great and mighty God.

## **Meanwhile, Out in The Field**

The same night Jesus was born, shepherds were camped outside in a field. The Bible says they were watching their flock. A flock is a bunch of sheep. It was nighttime so probably some of the shepherds were sleeping. But at least one stayed awake to make sure nothing happened to the sheep.

A good shepherd makes sure that none of his sheep get lost or anything like that. And then there are those wolves. They could hurt sheep you know. At nighttime, a good shepherd would keep his eyes open wide to make sure no wolves were around. One other thing about shepherds: You know they weren't very rich or anything like that. Taking care of sheep was a hard job, but shepherds weren't rich like football players or famous like movie stars or important like the president or anything like that. They were, well, they were just shepherds. But that night on that hillside God had a very special message for those shepherds.

## **Angelic Announcement**

The Bible says an angel of the Lord stood by the shepherds, a real angel, just like the angel that came to Zechariah and to Mary. The angel stood right there on the ground next to those shepherds. The Bible says it happened suddenly. That means quickly. Nobody saw the angel coming or heard him or anything like that. All of a sudden, the angel was standing right there. And you know what? (lean forward) The Bible says the glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds. That means there was this light. But it wasn't a regular light - it was much brighter than any light we know about, even brighter than the sun. You know how the sun hurts your eyes when you look at it. Well, brighter than that. The Bible calls this brightness the glory of the Lord. It flashed all around the shepherds. The shepherds were scared. The angel must have known the shepherds were afraid because right away he said, (read from Luke 2:10-12) "Don't be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people; because to you is born this day in the town of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." I bet the shepherds could hardly believe their ears. God had promised that He would send the Savior. The shepherds probably had heard about God's promise, but I bet they didn't think it would happen that very night! The Savior was really born! And the angel said the Savior was born in Bethlehem. Listen to what else the angel said, "This will be a sign to you, you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger." Mary had wrapped her sweet baby in cloths and put him in the manger. Now the shepherds could find Baby Jesus. They knew he was in the town of Bethlehem and they knew he was in a manger

## **Heavenly Praise**

Oh my, these shepherds had already been surprised that night. An angel had brought God's message. But I bet they weren't ready for the next big surprise! The Bible says, "Suddenly," that means quickly, "a multitude of the heavenly host came down and stood by the angel." That means a whole army of angels came. Lots and lots of angels and they stood by that first angel right there with the shepherds. The Bible says they were saying these beautiful praise words to God, "Glory to God in the highest!"

## **The Response**

Then the angels left and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Hurry, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." Those shepherds knew God had sent his angels to tell them about Jesus and they weren't going to waste any time! Off they hurried to Bethlehem. And there they found Mary and Joseph and a little baby lying in a manger. The Bible says the shepherds told what happened that night. They told Mary and Joseph and others as well. How could they possibly have kept quiet! I bet in their whole lives, they never forgot the night God sent angels to tell them Jesus was born!

### **Questions for Review with Younger Children**

- Who was going to Bethlehem?
- What happened in the stable?
- Who did the angels talk to and what did they say?
- What does Immanuel mean?
- Where was Jesus born?

### **Questions for Review with Older Children**

- Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
- What was so different about baby Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus left his beautiful heaven to be born in a stable?
- Joseph is called a son of David. Why is that important?
- What was the response of the shepherds to seeing Jesus?