

Week Three: Room for All

The Beginning



They couldn't believe what they had seen. Nothing ever happened to them – their life was just the hillside, sheep and more sheep. But today! Today they had seen a miracle. In all their days counting sheep, the Shepherds had never imagined that they might feel the way they had today. They had been invited into something awesome, the real life promise of great hope to come. They had a suspicion that things were really going to change from now on.

As they left the stable, they could run fast enough. It was early morning, yet they began to shout at the top of their voices about what they had seen. People were amazed at what they said! They sang praises and thanks to God for letting them be part of this moment. Today was going to be a busy day – they simply had to tell everyone the good news.

Sometime after, three rather more subdued guests left the house where Mary, Joseph and the baby had been. These guests had travelled far to be part of this moment, yet what they had seen far surpassed their expectations. They could not have anticipated that this promised King really meant all that it seems he did.

On their way to visit, they had called in on King Herod, and promised that they would tell him where they had found the child. But something didn't feel quite right anymore.

Caspar had a dream, warning him that perhaps King Herod didn't have good intentions. So, they decided to begin their journey home by another route, carrying with them the great story to tell to those they met on their way.



This story was based on [Luke 2: 17-20](#) and [Matthew 2: 11-12](#).

Reflection

And so, all are gathered in. After hours, weeks, months, perhaps years, the travellers have reached their destination. Mary, Joseph and their new family member find themselves at the end of one journey and on the edge of another. A band of Shepherds find their lives transformed in the blink of an eye, as they go from their quiet hillside life to being in the midst of a radiant host of angels and a newborn messiah. And the wandering Magi land halfway across the world, finally in the presence of a promise told long ago.

Whilst we will never know if shepherds sat next to gold-adorned Magi on a stable floor, the picture of this gathered group helps us to clearly see the distinction of this moment.

At this place of arrival, God gathers in these unexpected journeys.

In the inviting of the shepherds, people from the outside are welcomed in and the ordinary is made extraordinary.

In the long pilgrimage of the Magi, the Good News is opened up for all.

And in the carrying great change, the quiet and previously ignored voice of Mary declares transformation to the world.

And all this because God's choice of welcome made space for everyone around the manger.

But this scene is certainly not the end of the story. As soon as they are gathered in, each traveller returns to their space in the world. And as they go, the transformation of this experience goes with them.

In Luke 2, we hear that the Shepherds saw Jesus and, presumably after some rather excited conversations, left that place to spread the word. As they stepped out, these people who were previously found on the outside, often ignored and their voices not heard, were the first to share the message of redemption to the world. In their own words, they become the very first messengers of the gospel.

The Magi too arrive to see Jesus and find themselves in awe at what they see. This meeting with the King promised in the Jewish scripture, even in the form of a child, is enough to make them fall down and worship. And, despite their agreement to return to King Herod and tell him where Jesus is, they decide to return by a different route. Their path ahead is altered because of their encounter.

And Mary, called to play a leading role in the great story, is left with her child. She too has undergone a transformation – from quiet and left aside to carrying and carrying for a great message of redemption. Luke 2 tells us that her response to all this was small, but not lacking power: she *"treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."* Mary, an unlikely messenger, is invited into the process of change for herself, as well as for the world. As the world is change, so is she.

When each one is invited in, they leave changed.

In so many ways, this story paints a picture of what inclusion could mean for those involved. When the boundaries of the narrative are moved so that those on the margins are at the centre, we see with a fresh perspective. When we offer value to the voices we usually exclude, we hear so much more of the Good News. When we are open and willing to encounter with all, we ourselves can be transformed.

When we look to create change, who do we seek to lead us?

Are we willing to let power be disrupted, that change might come from an unlikely place?

Are we open to being changed ourselves, that we might become part of transformation?

Questions for reflection

As you have returned to the Advent story this Christmas, what has changed for you?

As you seek change in your area, or in our country, what could you do differently to raise up the voices of those unheard?

Whose story could you try and listen to, in order to learn how power could be disrupted?