

Luke 2: 15 – 21; Galatians 4: 4 – 7

“Left overs”

Ok, so Christmas was two days ago, who has ‘leftovers’ still left over? Bit of turkey in the fridge, and you’ve already had turkey sandwiches, curry, turkey pie, turkey wreath, and with beans on toast

Christmas is often a time when “left overs” seem to make up the meals until New Year ...

And today we’ve heard again of the shepherds – but they’ve already come right? Again it feels like a “left over”!

But I’d like to pause for a moment and take these small verses and explore them in slightly greater detail than: “oh yeah, the shepherds came, then the wise men” of the Christmas story. Because there’s parts of the story we probably skim over in telling the story – but I think these ‘left overs’ can make more of a meal!

Firstly, the shepherds themselves. They left everything behind to rush off after seeing the angels – there’s a sense of excitement and urgency here – they believed what they had heard, and they wanted to see this for themselves. So they “hurried down to Bethlehem”

Leaving their sheep – we don’t know if they left them in the care of someone, or if there were some shepherds who stayed back to look after the seep, or if they put them in some sort of pen or something – but they left their livelyhoods, their life – their entire life behind.

When God calls you to do something – how readily, in excitement at the news we’d just heard, would we give up something? Or leave something behind? Money? Job? Family? Life?

We pray regularly, don’t we, for our two link missionaries – they have done just that – they have left everything behind – the step of faith it takes to do that is incredible. And so this morning I want to say to you – if this is what God is prompting you to do – do it!

But many of you will think – well that isn’t me, that isn’t what I’m being called to do – no, perhaps not.

But the shepherds’ calling was something “temporary” wasn’t it? They left their sheep, excitedly made their way through the town, to find this child. Then they worshiped and they returned, praising God, glorifying him and telling all who were around what they had seen.

So it was a temporary thing – it was one night where they left it behind before coming back. But I think we can assume the experience changed them. I think it’s safe to say that these shepherds, as they went about looking after the sheep would tell anyone they could about the angels and this baby.

I imagine an old shepherd, some 30 years later hearing the stories of this new preacher, Jesus, and remembering that night ... well if Mary, mother of Jesus was still around at this point why not a young, now old shepherd?

I wonder if the shepherds spent the rest of their lives speaking of that night.

Maybe this morning God is asking you to do something smaller. To serve him in a new way, or perhaps he is trying to speak to you in a new way, and you’re a bit unsure as to what to think of it all, or what it might entail ... you having to put down things you might need to stop doing for a while ... Including perhaps being bold to talk to people about how your life has been changed by Jesus.

Has it been changed by Jesus? can you recall those moments where God spoke to you? do you remember the moments where your life was changed forever like the shepherds were?

I think we should get excited – we should be ready to leave behind our sheep for the night (or whatever the **PTO**

equivalent is for you at the moment) and we should dare to tell others what we have seen and heard ... following in the footsteps of those shepherds.

I believe that God is calling us to something new – I believe Coronavirus has revealed to us that the way we do things needs to change. The way we as a church interact with those around us has to change.

What we do Sunday by Sunday has to change ...

Oh no! I hear you thinking ... That young curate is coming in here, head full of these ideas and wants to try and change what I'm comfortable with – he wants to try and change things ...

And yes, I do.

Because I believe that God is calling us, as he always has his church, to be moving onwards, to be seeking out the poor, the marginalised, the lost, the missing 'those out there' to be proclaiming afresh to each generation the good news of Jesus.

God calls us out of our comfort zones, round the fire in our secure little sheep pens – and out into the world to worship and proclaim Christ's coming, and Christ's birth.

To proclaim Christ's forgiveness and freedom, for all.

And to redeem those under the 'law' even a self-imposed 'law' of 'well this is how things must be done because we always have' ... we aren't slaves, we are God's children! We have inherited a great gift, forgiveness, freedom from sin, a new start and life eternal – we must choose to wisely use what we have been entrusted with – and to be excited! To be as excited as a child at Christmas, if not more so! Going out and telling, so when those around us hear it "they are amazed" ...

Don't treat Jesus as a 'left over' something you begrudgingly consume over and over, but as a "fresh meal" ...

And in a moment as we share in Communion, in a 'fresh re-remembering' let us praise and glorify God again for that incredible gift we are all given – for his mercies are new every morning.