

“Fall on Your Knees!” – Christmas Eve

In second or third grade we are taught that writing or telling a story means answering six questions. Do you remember the questions? They are six words. *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* Have you ever applied these questions to Christmas story?

Who do you think the story is about? God? Jesus? Mary? Joseph? The Shepherds? Us?

What is happening? A couple are traveling to be enrolled, and along the way their child is born.

As for when this happened, no one really knows.

Where did this happen? In Bethlehem.

Why? Love, hope, grace. I think the most complete answer is Emmanuel, God with us.

Now for the difficult question -- *How does this impact your life?*

As you ponder that question, because pondering is what Mary did this night, I invite you to reflect on this story from a shepherd's perspective.

To tell the story from a shepherd's perspective, we need to understand a shepherd's life. Two weeks ago, we had our Nativity Pageant where we had some fine shepherds. With all due respect to the shepherds in our pageant, being a shepherd when Jesus was born was not an honor. You were simply a hired hand doing the work no one else wanted to do. You lived in the fields, among the sheep. People thought you were not trustworthy. People were suspicious of you, and they avoided you. You were an outsider and probably undocumented, which meant that before this night, whenever shepherds fell on their knees, it was not by choice. It was because they were being forced to by someone with power over them. And yet, the angel appears to the shepherds and tells them, *Be not afraid. God has found favor with you. God has chosen you to be the recipients of the good news of great joy for all the people. You are included, a part of the story. No wonder they went in haste to see this thing that had happened that the Lord made known to them!* They hear the good news of great joy and how do they react? *They fall on their knees as they hear the angel's voices.*

I suspect they also fall on their knees when they come before the child. Overwhelmed and awed by the moment, I imagine the shepherds kneeling, out of wonder and joy, instead of fear and intimidation. And then, they tell their story, and when they did, *all who heard it were amazed at what they shepherds told them.* Those who heard the story believed it, believed them.

No one thinks it is an idle tale, a lie, a shepherd's con. By listening to the shepherds, the people were no longer treating them as outsiders or outcasts. People listening to them meant they were included, welcomed, part of the story. This message of inclusion reaffirms that, *the good news of great joy is for all the people.*

Returning to our six questions. *Who is this story about?* All the people. *What happened?* The Shepherds were included. *When where they included?* As soon as the angel appeared. *Where did this inclusion happen?* Wherever they told the story. *Why did it happen?* Because the power of this night is that transformative. *How did this story impact those who heard the Shepherds tell it?* That is obvious.

How will this story impact us? That is something each of us must decide for ourselves. As you ponder how the Christmas story will impact you, hear again the message of hope, peace and love.

*Be not afraid
for behold I am bringing you good news of great joy
I bring it for you and for all the people!*

Merry Christmas!