



**Luke 1**  
**26-38**  
**New International Version**

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

**Appointments to be kept.** Tight schedules to maintain. Routines established. That’s how most of us try to live our lives. But what happens when life is interrupted with something totally unexpected? What happens when God steps in to redirect our priorities and focus? In December we will look at a couple examples of scripture to see what God does when life is interrupted.



# Sermon Notes

## Christmas is an **AWAKENING**

- *There is more going on than you realize!*
- *There is more to you than you know!*
- *You are more important than you believe!*

*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you*

## God interrupts to **DISRUPT**

*Monotony kills the soul.*

**“If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail”**

**“If all you have are sheep, everything is for sale,  
including you!”**

**“If all you have are things, everything can be replaced,  
including you!”**

**“If all you have is God, everything is beautiful and glorious,  
including you.”**

## God interrupts to **INSPIRE**

*“Poverty isn't the absence of money, but the absence of hope.”*

*So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger*

## God interrupts to **TRANSFORM**

*“all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”*



# MARKS OF GRACE

God gives us seasons of waiting, days of anticipation, and moment for reflection. Despite the incessant rush of our lives and the world around us, there are still sacred moments when things come to a halt, when all that we can do is done and we must wait, wait faithfully, anticipating joyfully, and reflect deeply.

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet." (Matthew 11:7-11)

In college, I went to a concert to see one of my favorite bands. The band put on a great show, everything I had hoped to see. As great as they were, a local band I had never heard of stole the show. These nobodies brought the house down with their passionate performance. I went to see a chart-topper, but it was an unknown local band that showed me how amazing a live show could actually be.

Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven can sneak up on you; it can make important stuff pale in comparison to even the tiniest glimpse of the kingdom. As we move through Advent, we are invited to leave space to be surprised. We may head to Christmas expecting carols, presents, and delicious food, but Jesus reminds us that even these joys are in anticipation of something amazing breaking in all around.

Surprising God, open my eyes and heart to receive you in unexpected ways. Help me to leave space in my life to be surprised by the ways in which your kingdom is present all around me. Amen.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God,  
who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith for ever.

Psalm 146:5-6

Opportunity comes with so many different faces that we often don't recognize it. That's probably why we sometimes miss its call. A previous generation said that opportunity comes dressed in overalls. And they were largely right, for nothing succeeds like hard work. Our generation thinks that opportunity comes with a college diploma. It may, but there's no guarantee.

The divine opportunity comes in what is, to our human eyes, the most unlikely garb of all. It's no wonder we don't recognize it; or that, recognizing it, we resist it. This Advent season is an especially good time to experience the divine opportunity. Any time is God's season; but because you and I find certain settings and circumstances especially hospitable to religious experience, Advent and Lent are particularly attractive.

The first Advent preacher, John the Baptizer, offered opportunity in a compelling, almost ferocious way. When you read his words, you don't think he's offering opportunity; I expect that if we had heard him in person, we would have been even more doubtful. William Barclay said that John's message "was not good news; it was news of terror" (The Gospel of Luke, Westminster John Knox Press, p. 28). I understand what Professor Barclay was saying, but I see it differently. It seems to me that good news must sometimes come dressed in rough clothing.