



Advent Reflection for Wednesday, December 22
Emily Newland

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

Luke 2:8-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

I’m impressed that the shepherds “went with haste.” Though a host of shocking events have descended upon our world in recent years, I remain unlikely to be moved to act with haste. Instead, I first must finish my workday, pick up my daughter from school, tidy the house, wash the dishes, and, since I deserve some “me time” after all this, check a few apps, by which time the emotional urgency is gone. If whatever it was still pulls at me, I’ll try to fit it in on Saturday.

Our limited emotional attention spans may be a 21st century problem, but it surely was not usual for these shepherds to depart from their routine to race to Bethlehem. During the night watch, any number of calamities could befall their flock. What I know about shepherding comes from the Bible, which clearly wants us to know that shepherds can be tender-hearted, brave, wise protectors of creatures that often act against their self-interests and can’t be left alone. Not to mention, this flock was their livelihood.

But the shepherds came, and their urgent message fell on Mary’s ears, a young, possibly unmarried girl from a religiously conservative society, who had just given birth in a barn. She is a woman of great faith, but even so, the circumstances sound punishing. She may have had a few doubts in the course of the

ordeal, and it might have been the right moment to receive the encouragement of strangers whose eyes were still bright from the light of the heavenly host.

It does leave me with one question: what did happen to the sheep after the angels and shepherds left? I have a feeling that the God of Psalm 23 was more than a metaphorical shepherd that night.

God has sent us the Holy Spirit instead of a choir of angels, but its urging in our souls may nonetheless have the power to change someone's life. May we have the faith this season to make haste when we hear it.

Emily Newland moved to New York from the Midwest in 2013 and did not expect to be raising a kid in Brooklyn. On weekends, Emily and Maple (4) are getting lost in the park, taking random buses around the city, or are at Coney Island. Emily works in the language industry (translation and interpretation) and spends her free time investing deeply in tv shows. She attends This Little Light with Maple and her husband, Warren.

