

Throughout the Scriptures, all manner of people are invited to “come and see.” Prophets call wandering people to come and see the God of their fathers. Disciples call their friends and family to come and see the One spoken of by Moses.

In the Christmas story from St. Luke’s Gospel, the call comes from a spectacular source: a holy angel sent from the highest heaven to a bunch of lowly shepherds in the fields. This angel calls them to come and see, declaring that, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

As we consider this angelic call, and who is saying it, and to whom, we are taught about to where we are called to come and see this Savior, born for every single one of us.

The first part of the angel’s call, the part just read, contains something so important and yet so obvious that we might just miss it. Namely, who is this that the shepherds – and we – are called to come and see? “A Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Savior. Christ. Lord.

This One the angel spoke of is the Savior, the One long promised to deliver the people from their sins. He is not the Savior of only the physical descendants of Abraham, but of the whole world.

All humanity is corrupted by sin. All people suffer the obvious effects of sin: pain, illness, fear, sadness, and finally death. Not one person can say that he hasn’t felt these, and none of us will escape death.

We can’t save ourselves, we must have a Savior. And on Christmas Day, God sent Him forth, to us and for us.

This Savior is the Christ, the Messiah. These titles mean “Anointed One.” This Savior was not picked at random, or someone who earned the right to do this. He was chosen by God from before the world began. And He was chosen for this purpose.

What He will do to save mankind has been foretold by the prophets. This chosen One will bear the iniquities of sinners and suffer the stripes they deserve, as the prophet Isaiah foretold. This promised Seed of the Woman will have His heel bruised by the serpent, even as He crushes the serpent’s head underfoot. Only this Christ, this Messiah, can do this.

You and I are powerless before such sin and death, but this Christ will wield the power of God to bring about our salvation.

He will wield this power because He is God Himself. The One announced by the angel is Savior, Christ, and Lord. This “Lord” doesn’t just mean “master.” This is the name of God, Yahweh, the Lord.

No mere man will be the Savior of mankind. No, God Himself will come and redeem His creation. This also was foretold by God through the prophet Isaiah, who announces that the Coming One will be Immanuel, which means “God with us.”

Not just a prophet. Not simply a priest. Not only a king. The child born in Bethlehem is God, the only God. These angels who fill the sky are His servants; they sing His praise. We come and see the child in the manger, not because He's cute or this holiday gives us the warm fuzzy feelings, but because He is the Savior who alone saves us from death and hell, because He is the Christ, chosen to be the only way to heaven, because He, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is the one and only God.

So where do we go to see this Savior, Christ, and Lord? If He's the God of glory, maybe we should look for Him in glory, in that which appears majestic and wonderful to us.

Think about the shepherds and what that evening must have been like for them. All is quiet out in the fields, just another evening, when this heavenly messenger appears, blazing with heavenly glory. He has to tell them, "Fear not," because to behold an angel reflecting even a tiny fraction of the glory of the Most High is terrifying for a sinful man.

And just when the shepherds' eyes start to adjust to the light and lift up their heads a little bit, suddenly there are more angels, and more, and more, and more! A multitude fill the sky, all blazing with light, shining with glory, making the night as day. And then they start to sing, filling the previously silent night with a chorus normally only heard in the realms of heaven. The beauty and wonder and majesty would have been absolutely overwhelming!

Had the angel not said anything more, where might the shepherds have looked for this God-child? No doubt they would have searched for more glory, more splendor.

If this Christ's heralds are so magnificent, surely the Christ Himself must appear even more magnificent! If the servants of the Lord sounded forth such heavenly refrains, then the actual location of the Lord must be even more heavenly. If the Savior was announced with such glory, then He Himself must be even more glorious.

We today might think along these same lines, looking for glory when we look to "come and see" the Christ. Now we likely don't look for actual angels blazing in the night when try to figure out where the Christ is, but we often do look for earthly glory. And this can take many different forms.

Perhaps you've gone off to experience God in the beauty of nature, to feel God in the majesty of the mountains or the peace of the forest or wherever else.

Or maybe you've thought that you should see Christ where you get a "good" feeling. Being part of an organization that does good things, working to help others, acting in a "Christ-like" manner – surely Christ must be there, in the glory of human goodness.

Or perhaps you've had an incredible experience in a worship service, perhaps in a high church setting with great solemnity and reverence, or maybe in a contemporary one where you "felt the Spirit move" when the praise band hit the bridge and the stage lights shifted. All of these are a seeking of Christ in glory.

Now by themselves, these can all be good things. True glory is from God, after all. Yet to put such glorious experiences, if we can call them that, above the One who gives glory is to commit idolatry and seek after something other than God Himself.

Nature is beautiful, but when it becomes a higher priority to be out in nature than to actually hear the Word of the One who created nature, nature becomes an idol, and we become idolators.

Performing acts of charity for others is a good thing, one the Scriptures tell us to do, but if we think that they are enough for us to find God, or that as long as we feel good about what we do, then that's enough for eternal assurance, we end up telling Christ that we don't need His saving grace, but that we can work our way into heaven on our own.

Reverence and true joy are important to have in worship, but when you place the way worship makes you feel over what is proclaimed in that worship, you are seeking after feelings, not after God.

The Savior announced by the angel was not found in the glory seen in the fields. The Christ who came for us is not to be sought in the various things we might call "glorious" in this world.

Where do we seek this Savior, then? We look for Him where He tells us in His Word. After declaring to the shepherds that their Lord was born that day, the angel continued, saying, "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." The angel expressly tells the shepherds what they're looking for: a baby, wrapped in cloths, in a manger.

Think about how much that would have gone against all their human expectations. They've just had a vision of heavenly splendor, and now they're told that the king of heaven is a baby, lying in a feed box? They're supposed to find the God who lit the stars and stretched out the heavens in a dingy stable somewhere?

When they finally find the baby and Mary and Joseph, the experience is very different from the fields. Heavenly light has been replaced with maybe a flickering oil lamp or two. The perfect harmonies of the angels are gone, and in their place are likely the various sounds of whatever animals usually eat out the manger in which the baby's now lying. No one needs to tell them to "Fear not," but if it were us, confirm that yes, they are in the presence of God.

But these shepherds, what do they do? At the word of God, spoken through the angelic messenger, they race from the fields into town, searching for this Divine Child. Once they find the right place, they aren't put off by the sights and sounds and smells, but instead relay the glorious news from the angels to Mary and Joseph.

And when they finally leave, they go forth glorifying and praising God, and glorifying and praising Him for all they had seen and heard. All they had seen and heard – not just the part with visible glory. Why?

Because the Word of God had told them what was truly important. The angels were glorious, but in the baby in the manger, these shepherds had beheld the face of God. These humble people were privileged with a sight that the prophets and kings of old had longed for and never seen. In that stable was the same God and Lord who had once dwelled in the gold-lined Holy of Holies in the temple. These shepherds had seen their salvation, beheld the love of God for them in human flesh.

Still today, God comes to us, not in glory and splendor, but in humble means. Our God has given us His Word, the Bible, where we can hear what His Spirit has caused to be written and preserved throughout the ages for us.

It might seem boring, or we might think there are better things to do, or that we just don't have the time, but when you read your Bibles, you are hearing how your God has worked throughout history and even entered into history for you, for the sake of your eternal souls. The Scriptures are not some man-made invention, but came about, as they say, as "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Through that Bible, through the Word, Jesus tells us further where you are to come and see Him. He tells you that when you go to church and hear the reading and the preaching of that word, you are hearing Him. As He Himself says, speaking to His disciples as they prepare to head out and preach, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me."

We pastors certainly do not shine with heavenly glory or speak with perfect harmony like the angels, but where we speak in accord with the Scriptures, you can have the assurance and comfort of your Lord and Savior speaking to you.

That Lord who took on flesh in Bethlehem two millennia ago still comes to us in His actual flesh and blood in Holy Communion. As He said, very plainly, "This is my body." "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." The God who became flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who offered up His flesh and blood for the sins of the world upon the cross, He still comes to His people in flesh and blood.

This may not all be how we think that God should come to us. We might think that the Lord's coming to us should be more exciting, or more fun, or more glorious, or whatever. But our Savior and Christ doesn't work that way.

He comes as a child, a baby, that He might show His divine might in ways which the world sees as weak and foolish. He comes in humility, that no one might need to hear "fear not" before hearing Him speak.

Just as the word spoken by the heavenly messengers gave the shepherds faith to believe what they were seeing in that baby in the manger, still today God's earthly messengers speak His word, that you might see and hear the Lord who was born to be your Savior.

He invites you here, to come and see what is truly important, to experience the love of God Himself. This Christmas, may our Savior, Christ, and Lord bless with you with the same faith given to the shepherds, that you might behold the true, eternal glory of the Child born for you in Bethlehem.

In His name, amen.