

“Resolve” Sermon for Christmas Eve Candle lighting, Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:1-20, Luke 2:15

15 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.”

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The shepherds made no hesitation. They responded with resolve to God’s revelation. They resolved:

1. Let us go see, “Let us experience this firsthand.”
2. They resolved, “Let us not procrastinate.”
3. They resolved, let’s make Christ known.
- 4.

Bethlehem was the beginning of God’s gathering the human race together around the Christ, breaking down our walls. God chose shepherds to first receive the message.

Shepherds were at the bottom of the social order.

As the weaker and less powerful members of society, taking care of someone else’s sheep, they foreshadowed what was to come.

What was God thinking, to choose a gathering of nobodies to reveal God’s new day in Christ?

In our normal world, we think that the strong and the powerful have all of the advantages. Yet we are not normal. We are holy because Christ lives in us.

Pope Francis wrote in his 2013 sermon on reform, *Evangelii gaudium* (the joy of the Gospel):

Without the preferential option for the poor and marginalize, the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ is submerged in human greed.

God chooses the “base and lowly and the despised of this world” so that those who boast will “boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1).”

God has resolved to use that kind of person, in spite of our antipathy for them-the base, the despised, the poor and the weak: Joseph, Mary and Jesus.

We work hard to insulate ourselves from people of lower socio-economic classes. We don't want to be around the struggling. We don't want to be near the poor. We want to live in our safe little bubble. But the shepherds remind us of the nature of Christ's mission among us. If we want to experience God's

presence at all, we have to meet Christ where he said he would always be-among the outcasts, the disgraced and the despised of human society.

Participation in Christ gives us a new outlook of life and the human beings around us. We gather at the place of a child, conceived of a single, virgin mother.

There is a temptation to run away from this fact. It does not fit well with our own assumed place and power in society. Yet it is what God chose. God sides with the scandalous, the disgraced, the nothings and nobodies, the weak, and it is the weak that God has chosen to bear witness to God's strength in the human context.

Mississippi sharecropper and freedom fighter Fannie

Lou Hamer said at the Democratic Nat. Convention:

As long as you stand with your foot on my neck
you got to stay in this ditch with me. But if you move,
I'm coming out. I want us both to get outta this
Ditch, not for you to go replace me in it.

Christ even now invites: “Let us hasten to Bethlehem in the simplicity of faith, where God awaits us in joy, forgiveness, power and love. Amen.