

# Calling All Shepherds

by Carter Conlon

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**Scripture:** Luke 2:8, Jeremiah 23:1, Matthew 23:1, John 10:27, Psalm 23:1

**Topics:** "Hope and Redemption", "Shepherding and Care"

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## Description

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## Transcript

And for those who are with us online, I do pray with all my heart that this would be the best Christmas time of your entire life. Jesus Christ said that he had come to preach the gospel to the poor, and so if you feel tonight poverty-stricken, if you feel you don't have the resources to face life or to face your future, he brought good news to you, that in him you will find the supply that you need to face whatever it is that you have to face in the days that are just ahead of you. He came to heal those that are bruised and broken in heart and taken captive.

And when you see the prayer requests that are coming into this worldwide prayer meeting, there are so many that are just bruised, broken, hurting, unable to see a way forward, behind prison doors, unable to get out in their own strength. And I don't know about you, but I'm asking Jesus just to do in this generation what he said he came to do. I want to pray for you tonight before I speak from the word of God, and I'm going to ask everybody in the sanctuary tonight to join me, just to pray for you online tonight, you, whoever you are, sitting or standing or kneeling or whatever it is, or laying down at whatever place you're in.

I'm just going to pray that God come and meet you and do a miracle in your life. Lord Jesus Christ, God Almighty, we stretch our hands out towards those that you have allowed us to visit tonight through the internet. Through this medium of technology, you have brought us into somebody's home.

Now take us into their situation. I ask you, Lord, that you would stretch your hand out, God, tonight at the sound of our words, and that you would bring healing, you would bring freedom, you would bring vision, you would bring sight. God, you would do something profound in the lives of people that could only be attributed to the working of your power.

Nothing else could be said about it, that everyone's testimony will be, I was in my room, I was in my place, and I was in a certain state, but God came and visited me and set me free. And Father, I ask that you would give those that you touch this day, God, this evening, give them the ability to go out and tell others where strength might be found. We're asking you, Lord Jesus Christ, to raise up a ministry again in our generation that points back to you, back to your mercy, back to your power, back to your intended purpose.

God Almighty, deliver us, Lord, from every other thing that has kept our minds and our hearts from what really matters and from where the power of God really is in time and in eternity. Help me to speak tonight. Father, I thank you for this, and I praise you in Jesus' name.

At the end of this message this evening, we're going to go to the communion table, and we're going to celebrate this incredible victory of God's Son for you and for me. And so feel free to get some bread, some juice of any sort in your home. Get a cracker, get whatever you have, get a glass of water if you have no juice.

And we're going to celebrate the victory of God's Son for you on the cross, paying the price for the sin that separated, that means the wrongdoing that separated you from God, so that you could come back into a living relationship with God. Firstly, having the assurance that when you die, heaven is going to be your eternal home. And secondly, entering into a life that has meaning, which God promised to those who would turn to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

God will give you a new purpose. God will give you new meaning in your life. I'm going to speak a message tonight, which I believe is prophetic.

God is seemingly is asking me as I see it. Now, I'm not asking you to...I'm not here to convince you. You have to bear witness in your own heart.

But I feel in my heart that God is calling me lately to be a herald as it is, announcing something that He intends to do. You can call that what you will, but I have never been more sure in my life that I'm speaking in the Spirit to somebody tonight, more than one, several this evening. The message title is Calling All Shepherds.

Now, I have a soft spot in my heart for shepherds because I was one. For those of you who don't know it, Pastor Teresa and I had a sheep farm for several years, and we had 68 female sheep with a couple of rams, and we had a lot of lambs, a whole barn full of lambs every springtime. And so I look back at fond memories.

And when I read the Christmas story and it talks about shepherds being out in the field with their sheep, I understand what that looks like because I spent a lot of evenings in a barn, a lot of nights in a barn, especially at the time when they're having young, or some of them might've been sick. Or I remember one night sleeping in the hay mow, we used to call it, because one of the female sheep was having difficulty in giving birth. I remember another night staying up all night because there were coyotes in the area.

And I knew most all of the sheep by name. I remember their names affectionately even this day. I remember Spotty, and Agnes, and Christine.

I remember Shag, and Tina, and so many of these sheep that I'd come in. I knew their characteristics. I knew the ones that needed their ears rubbed.

I knew some of them needed a bit of a stern talking to, because they were pushing the weaker ones away from the places of feeding. I'm so glad I got to be a shepherd for a season because it gave me an understanding of what it means to pastor the people of God. The Lord has a very sensitive spot in his heart for shepherds.

And I'm going to conclude this message today by talking about the reason why I believe he revealed the coming of his son to shepherds. Now, there was another kind of shepherd throughout seasons in the history of God's people that had been allowed or pushed their way, may I say, into prominence among the people. Their motives weren't always clear or clean.

And quite often, the shepherds that would rise up in a time of spiritual declension were the actual reason why the nation went into declension, because they were using the ministry, they're using these positions for something other than what God intended it to be. Listen to what the prophet Jeremiah says in Jeremiah chapter 23. He said, Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, says the Lord.

Now, you can see this anger in the heart of God. You can understand that there's a day when these shepherds will stand before the Lord and give an account of what they have done in the commission they were given to bring the people of their time into the knowledge of who God is. Therefore, thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed my people, you've scattered my flock, driven them away and not attended to them.

Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doing, says the Lord. But I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries where I've driven them, and I'll bring them back to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase. Thank God for his promises.

No matter what the shepherds had done to the people of under their charge in that time, God says, though you've driven them out, I'm going to bring them home, and I'm going to bring them back into a place of rest, and they're going to be fruitful, and they're going to increase. In verse four, he says, I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking, says the Lord. Now, this is in the season of Jeremiah, but now we fast forward to the ministry of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

And on his way to the cross, Jesus confronts and he defines the reasons for the decline of the nation and the spiritual unawareness of the people. Their Messiah was in their midst. The Messiah that the scriptures had said was going to come.

The shepherds of that time should have known it. They should have recognized the Messiah. If they knew the scriptures, if they were in the ministry for the right reasons, they would have discerned the time.

They would have understood who was speaking to them. Remember, Jesus himself said, my sheep know my voice, and they follow me. Somehow, these people had gotten into spiritual preeminence in the nation at this time, and even though the Messiah was in their midst, they were completely unaware of it.

The shepherds of this time were using their ministry, which God had entrusted to them, for themselves and not for the people. Now, Jesus defined it clearly why they were blind and why the people under their leadership had no vision. They couldn't see.

They couldn't even see the Messiah in their midst. Jesus spoke to the multitudes in Matthew chapter 23, verse 1, saying, the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not according to their works, for they say and do not.

For they bind heavy burdens hard to bear and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. In other words, they weren't practicing anything they were preaching. They knew, in a sense, some of the context, may I put it that way, of God's word, but they themselves were not partakers of it.

They were feeding something to the people that they themselves didn't do. Verse 5, he says, all their works they do to be seen of men. In other words, they were using the ministry for themselves.

It was for their own aggrandizement. It was their own sense of achievement and vision of what their life is supposed to be. It's the type of a shepherd today that's just counting people in the pews, and the measure of his or her success is based on the numbers of people attending to what they're doing in the name of God.

But they don't really know the people. They don't care much about the people. They don't walk among the people.

They don't bind them up. They don't heal them. They don't know their family situations, and quite frankly, many of them don't care.

The people are just there to give them a sense of accomplishment and success. In verse 6, he says, they love the best places at feasts and the best seats in the synagogue. So it's for a sense of accomplishment of self.

It's for personal comfort and personal recognition, and greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men rabbi, rabbi, to be exalted as a teacher, a powerful preacher, whatever the situation is. What Jesus was saying, in essence, you don't know who I am because the ministry doesn't know who I am. Ministry has lost the heart of God.

The ministry that's set over many people in this particular time in history, as in Jeremiah's time, are using the ministry and the position I've given them for other than what it was intended for. Now, in Jeremiah, he says at the end of his warning to the shepherds of that time, he said, I'm going to gather my people. I'm going to give them shepherds, number one, who will feed them.

They're not necessarily the best theologians that ever graced the doors of a church, but they will know truth, and they will be able to feed the people in a sense with that which will give them strength. These shepherds will cause the people not to be afraid, nor dismayed. In other words, looking at the scope of the battle that's before them and being dismayed because of the lack of their own resources, and nor shall they be lacking.

They will feed them. They will take away their fear, give them hope for their futures, and show them the supply that's available to them from God himself. Now we go to the Christmas story in Luke chapter 2. In

this context, you see, the point I want to make tonight, or at least start with, it's not coincidence that the message of the Messiah came to shepherds.

The Lord himself bypassed the religious elite of the day. I don't know what they were doing. I assume that they were trying to get the best seats and the best ends.

They obviously had no care for a young couple and a young woman who was in labor and about to give birth. Nobody there could give up their table. Nobody would give up their bed.

Nobody would give up a meal. Nobody seemingly even would rise to help this young couple. That's what religion can become without the heart of God at its center.

Now they're in the same country, shepherds abiding, living out in the fields. In other words, they were living where the people, in this case, it was sheep, of course, but they were out where the sheep are. They were living where they are.

I'm talking to people online tonight. You live where the people live. You know the struggles in your community.

You know the addicted, the afflicted, the depressed. You know the food deprived. You know the families that are hurting because you live there.

You're out in the field where they are. You see, the problem that you don't know yet that you're a shepherd. You don't understand yet that the call of God is on your life to do something.

Now, it doesn't have to be grand in a sense, the way we see grandness in our generation. Let me explain that in just a minute. They were out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night.

You are living in a place, and you're not aloof from the struggles of others. You actually care about them. You care about their struggling families, their sickened bodies, the fact that your friends don't have a job, and you're doing the best you can to bring some form of comfort to them.

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, a messenger from God, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be the sign to you. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with an angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men.

And so it was when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let's now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. There are people online tonight that you're going to get up and you're going to start moving towards the promise of God that is yours in Jesus Christ. No, you don't have all the theology.

You don't understand it all. You know that you have been struggling, but a message has come to you that God has sent your answer to you. The son of God has come to get you.

Yes, others may not recognize him. Others may not see any symbolism in the fact that there's a baby crying in a manger, but God has spoken something to your heart. And because you are a shepherd, you're going to get up and you're going to start moving.

You see, the shepherds are going to move now towards this message of hope that is there for all people. It's good news of great joy to all people. And they heard this.

They heard that God has come and he's doing something. I don't understand it all, but I'm going to get up and I'm going to move towards it. I want to see this for myself.

You see, I'm speaking tonight to those who are addicted and afflicted and struggling, and you deal with a poor self-image and all the rest that this life has got to offer you, but you're hearing something in your heart. You're hearing something in a message from God. And I'm telling you, you're going to get up and you're going to start moving towards it.

The message has come to you because you're a shepherd. The message has come to you because you care. You're not aloof from the struggles of others.

You've known what it's like to struggle. You've known what it's like to be out in the cold and feel marginalized and ineffective and maybe as a failure. But the message has come to you this Christmas of good news with great joy for all people that God's son has come.

The whole society around is stirring and people are running from store to store. They're buying gifts and they're putting up lights. They're holding all kinds of festivities, but there are so few that understand what this is really all about.

God has sent his son. The son of God has come. The son of God has come to redeem humanity.

The son of God has come to open prison doors, give sight to the blind, to release those who are oppressed from oppression, to open the resource of heaven to those who have no power in themselves to go where they need to go. The son of God has come. And tonight you're sitting in your wilderness and the Lord's speaking to you and he's saying, get up and go see this thing because there's going to be more to this than you understand.

Get up and move towards your freedom. Your freedom might look small. Your freedom might look to the natural to be powerless, but the Lord says to you, I assure you the son of God is not powerless.

I assure you that even though his voice is little more than the whimper of a baby at this stage, yet his voice can create a galaxy by a spoken word. I assure you that he has the power to raise the dead. He can calm your storm.

He can multiply your supply. I assure you that he can give you hope for the future and become a supply of living water inside of you that the Bible says will never fail you. I assure you that the son of God has a plan for your life much bigger than how you have seen your life thus far.

And I'll tell you why. Because you're a shepherd, because you care. You only have a little bit under your hand, but you really do care for what's under your hand.

Even if you did lose some of it, you still care. You care because you're a shepherd. You're not among those who are going to use God for some self-fulfilling destiny.

You're not going to use the people for your own sense of accomplishment. You're not going to lay a burden upon them, which you yourself are unwilling to bear. You're not of that spirit.

I'll tell you why. Because you're a shepherd. That's why the message of God's son was given to shepherds.

The angel could have knocked on the door of the inn in Bethlehem, could have gone to the nearest place of worship where I'm sure there was a lot of chanting and smoke and reading of scriptures going on, but he didn't go there. He went to shepherds. Shepherds.

They didn't have much, but they kept what they had. The scripture says they were keeping watch over their flock by night. They had been entrusted something simply that seemed very small, but they were watching it.

They were guarding it, and God knew it, and God saw it, and he sent his messenger to shepherds. The scripture says they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. When they had seen him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. God is going to raise up shepherds again in this generation. You see, folks, here it's really simple.

When Jesus first came, the message was given of his coming to shepherds. And before he returns, he's going to give the message to shepherds once again. And it's the shepherds that will gather the people.

It's the shepherds that will have the message of God's redemption. They're not in ministry for any other reason. They're not using it for the best seats in the synagogue or to be called Rabbi, Rabbi in the marketplace.

They're taking the message of God's provision and salvation to the people. They may not have ever big churches, but they will care for that which God puts under their hand. What God puts under your hand might only be your own children, might be your own family, and then it will expand to your neighbors and your friends.

And before you know it, you just might have a Bible study going in your house because you're a shepherd. You don't have to know it all. You have to know him.

There's a big difference. You know, the Pharisees knew a lot of scripture. The scribes knew a lot of scripture, but when he came, they didn't know him.

But when you know him, when you understand his kindness, when you've gone to see, it says, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this child. They just went out and said, God said, the messenger sent from God said, this is good news of great joy to all people that God has sent his son. The son of God has come to give us life and to give it to us eternally and to give it to us on the earth more abundantly.

And then verse 20 says, then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told them. The shepherds returned. The shepherds one day will come home.

The shepherds will come back to God and say, God, oh God, thank you for giving me an understanding of the simplicity of the coming of your son, for helping me to understand the cross, for giving me a heart for people that have no hope apart from your mercy to them and your good news that you put in my heart to give them. Thank you, Jesus, for making it simple. And so in this dark time, God is calling you now.

You're a shepherd. You thought you were a drug addict. You thought you were sitting there depressed.

You thought that was all that your life is, that you're always going to be on the more or less the Egypt side of redemption, captivated, one day I'm going to be free. But life is intended by God to be much more than that for you, not just to be free. He's taking you into someplace that will bring glory to his name, place of abundance, a place of strength, a place of giftings, a place of a new heart, a new mind, a place of a new future, a place where the calling on your life begins to be known because you are a shepherd.

Praise be to God. You see, the Lord is going to raise up shepherds again in this last generation. We might not be able to meet in big buildings.

Only God knows that for sure. Our society might devolve to the place where it could even become illegal to gather in large groups in God's name. Who knows what the future holds, but I know one thing, that God holds the future, and I know he always has a plan, and I know his plan always involves shepherds.

Hallelujah. So I'm calling you a shepherd tonight. God's calling you to more than you could ever understand or ever feel or ever know that your life is intended to be.

Start this way. Jesus Christ, thank you for coming to get me. Thank you for dying in my place that I might have life.

Thank you, Lord, for giving me a reason to live while I live on this earth. Thank you for bringing me out of confusion and making it clear. God, thank you for letting me see your son.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, God, for giving me a message. A heart to bring it to others.

Thank you, God, that I can go to people just like me. I can tell them what I found. I can tell them what I've seen.

I can tell them they can be free. I can tell them that what you've done in my life, you can do for them. Thank you, God.

I may not have a big flock, but it doesn't matter, God. I will look after that which you put under my hand. I will be a shepherd to them.

I will bring you there, and I'll bring them to you. And God, by your grace, the day the trumpet sounds, I'll bring them home. Shepherds.

I see shepherds. I see shepherds everywhere. I see Bible studies in homes all over the nation.

Shepherds. Just opening and reading the word of God, giving encouragement to those that are discouraged, helping those who are dismayed, helping their young, binding up their wounds, giving them a reason to live. Oh, God.

Oh, God. Thank you. Thank you for what you've chosen to let me see.

Thank you, Jesus. God Almighty. Help those that are online tonight to hear this.

The calling on every life is much deeper than we understand. Father, I thank you. Father, thank you.

Thank you. In Jesus' name, thank you. We're going to have communion in just a moment.

I'm going to ask you to go get some bread and some juice. We're going to celebrate together, and we're going to thank God with all of our hearts that we have a reason to live. In Jesus' name.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

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