

Shepherds In a Quiet Place

by Carter Conlon

This sermon focuses on the invitation to find peace, joy, and favor in God's presence in the midst of societal upheaval. It emphasizes the importance of stillness, faith, and seeking God's word for transformation and empowerment. The message highlights the need to be like the shepherds who were quiet, open, and willing to receive God's message and promises, leading to a life of purpose and impact.

Scripture: Psalms 46:1, Luke 2:8, Hebrews 12:26, 1 John 4:18, John 3:16, Matthew 24:6, Psalm 139:23, Isaiah 41:10, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Finding Peace in Chaos", "Embracing God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning, a message that has been stirring in my heart, and it's about 2019. And I believe it's a prophetic word for many here today, hopefully for all, myself included. I want you to turn to Psalm 46 in the Old Testament, and also from Luke chapter 2, and I want to talk to you about shepherds in a quiet place.

Shepherds in a quiet place. Father, I thank you with all my heart for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. Thank you, Lord, for your mercy, that you are guiding us into the future, and you're speaking deep promise to every heart.

No matter what the future looks like in the natural, you are in it. You're on total control of it. And Lord God, you have something as always for your people.

So Lord, I thank you for giving me the ability to convey this clearly today, and for giving our hearts, each of us, the ability to receive it. And we thank you for it in Jesus' name. Psalm 46.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling. There is a river whose stream shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

The nations raged. The kingdoms were moved. He uttered his voice.

The earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two.

He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Now, just as in Psalm 22, King David, not fully comprehending, I don't think, what he was writing, but when you read it, you realize that he had entered into the sufferings of Christ when he began that Psalm, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? These are the words that Jesus himself was going to utter on the cross. And David saw something in the future. And when you look at the Psalms, quite often you're going to see that prophetic edge is in the Psalms.

The Holy Spirit is moving upon the writers. And as he's moving upon the writers, you'll see that all, not just the Psalms, but all the way through scripture, there's, there's a vision given of the future, even if they can't fully comprehend it. Now the writer of this Psalm, for example, they didn't know geography as we do.

They didn't understand the heavens as we, they didn't have the windows into the heavens that we have today through satellites and spaceships and everything else and telescopes. They, but they did have the Holy Spirit of God speaking to their hearts about things that were to come one day. Now, this particular Psalmist saw that there was a day coming into the world that the earth itself would be seemingly moved out of its pattern that it has, it has sustained itself in for all of time as we've known it.

There would be a shaking in the midst of the earth. There would be, the waters would begin to move and overflow their borders. Even mountains because of earthquakes would shake with the swelling.

And he saw calamity coming on the earth. Why else would the writer write these words? A calamity that we've not experienced. Israel has not experienced this yet.

Neither has the rest of the world experienced it, but the Psalmist saw it because the Holy Spirit was inspiring the writing of these words. But he also saw something else. He saw in the midst of this shaking, a life source, may I call it that, another river, even though the earth's waters are seemingly overflowing their borders.

And that can be figurative for our cities might be in chaos. Countries might be trying to overflow their borders and conquer other countries. Culture, Jesus said in Matthew 24, culture is going to rise and fight against culture in the last days.

People will overflow their borders, the borders of civility, of natural behavior, the borders that God has established even of the ways of proper thinking. Seemingly the world would just overflow these borders. But in the midst of all of this overflow, there will be another source of life, a life source that will make glad the city of God.

That will make glad your heart and glad my heart. There'll be another water, may I put it that way. In the midst of the world's waters overflowing, there'll be another stream of water that is being commissioned and available to the people of God.

In other words, I'm going to say it simply, when all hell breaks loose in the earth, the true child of God will have a gladness and a song in their heart that is inexplicable apart from the presence and the provision of God. God is in the midst of this. God, the one who cannot be moved and God will help his people.

The scripture says, just at the break of dawn, when nations are raging, kingdoms are being moved, and it seems like the earth is melting. God will reveal himself to his people in a powerful way one more time. Many are going to lose heart.

Hebrews chapter 12 verses 26 to 28 talks about a time coming on the earth, that everything that can be shaken is going to be shaken, that only that which cannot be shaken might remain. And might I suggest the only thing that cannot be shaken in this world is Christ. The only thing that cannot be shaken is his church, his true blood-bought, spirit-filled, word-centered church will not be shaken.

Our value system is not of this world. We carry in these earthen bodies the spirit of the living God, and with his Holy Spirit, we were given a new mind, a new heart, a new spirit. We were given a new value system.

We see things now from the perspective of eternity. I will not take my house with me, I will not take my job, I will not take my clothes, but I will take you and I will take my family into eternity by God's grace. And I will take every soul that God enables me to speak to in this generation.

That's my value system. So let everything else be shaken, and everything that can be shaken will be shaken, but those who are built on the rock of this victory and value system of Christ, the rains will come and the floods will beat against it, but it will stand because it's not founded on anything of this world, only on the things of God. The irony, I suppose, in this present and soon-to-come moment is that he calls us to be still in the midst of all the chatter that will be going on at that time.

It's starting now. It's in the media, it's in the streets, it's in the workplace. Endless talk.

You know, when we're judged for every word we've ever spoken, I hope I'm not standing behind some people because it's going to be a long, long time for everything that everybody is speaking. Be careful with your words, folks. Be careful.

Remember, it's being recorded. Jesus said you'll give an answer for every word you speak. There's got to be a stillness inside.

It's the willingness to separate ourselves from the endless blather of a society that doesn't know where it's going. Endless talk, endless discussion. I hope you're tired of it.

I hope you've had enough. Yes, praise God. I hope you've had enough of it.

I hope you've had so much of it that you'll just just turn it off, might I suggest. You can opt in once a month for an hour and nothing has changed. They're still talking about the same thing.

You turn on any news station, it's Mueller, Mueller, Mueller, Mueller, Trump, Trump, Trump. That's all it is. So yes, that's all it is.

It's all the same old stuff that goes on 24 hours a day. It never changes. So shut it off and go in once a month for an hour and catch up on all the latest stuff and then go back into that place of stillness again.

There are people today who say that I'd rather hear nothing than be a partaker of the confusion and vengeful rhetoric at this time. I'd rather be alone on the hillside than be in a house in self-focused and selfish religion. And that's what happened in Luke chapter two.

You know, every day has its religion, but when religion loses the heart of God, when the heart of Christ is not at the center core, when the value system is no longer about others, it turns to self and then it turns ultimately to ease and comfort. And that's what much of the religion had turned to in the days of Luke chapter two, in the midst of their upheaval. It must have seemed to the people of that time, like the mountains were falling, the mountains being the promises of God that had been made through Abraham to the people of God, that they would be blessed and become a blessing in the earth.

The mountains that no tongue, no weapon formed against you can prosper. But it seemed as if these mountains of promise had fallen. The borders were overflowing.

The waters of godlessness had flooded the nation of Israel. And so many people would have read this particular Psalm and say, that's not coming. It's already here.

And in the midst of it all in the city of, in the town of Bethlehem is a religion that is just focused on itself. When, when we lose the heart of God, that's what happens. A whole attendance to the house of God is what new comfort can it bring to me? And it's that kind of a religion that becomes powerless.

Here's Rome occupying the promised land, shuffling the people around like cattle, prone to acts of violence in towns and cities that the people seem defenseless to protect themselves against. Their, their ideologies, their religion is being marginalized and laughed at and mocked and called of no significance. I'm sure, I'm sure that some of the populace that were invading that land at that time would be mocking the people.

Where is your God? Where's your God that brought you through the red sea? Where's your God that rained down apparently bread from heaven? Where did he go? Is he sleeping? What happened to him? In Bethlehem, it must have seemed like it couldn't get any, any worse. It was an awful time. It was a time when people are being shuffled all over the place and for the, for the purpose of just being counted so they could be taxed.

And it didn't matter if you're going to have a baby, as in the case of Mary, she would have been in her ninth month at this point. It didn't matter if you're inconvenienced, you just did what you were told because this was a, an era of total government control of the people. The religion that was founded Bethlehem had no cries of new birth inside of its walls.

You know, I, there's no, I have no doubt that there are people who know the scriptures there inside. They, they're sitting at their table, they're having their meals, they're preparing to sleep. They've made their reservations well in advance.

They're comfortable as, as much as their own efforts can bring them into comfort. They're studying the scriptures. They might've even been praying, but you see religion that becomes self-focused has no cries of new birth inside its walls anymore.

It becomes just a systemic form, a systemic observance of religious rituals without power. Nobody wants to be interrupted. Nobody, nobody wants new birth inside their walls.

Nobody wants to leave their meal. Nobody wants to miss a meal for the sake of somebody else. Nobody wants to be inconvenienced or lose sleep.

Everybody wants to be comfortable. It, religion in our time and other times has, gets to the point where it has no heart of God for those who are in trouble and have no one to help. It's forgotten the doctrines of self-denial, personal inconvenience, and sacrifice that are an inseparable part of representing God in the earth.

And we live in a generation like that. We're almost, not quite, but a large percentage of what is preached and taught in this nation is all about me, myself, and I, my life, my liberty, and the pursuit of my own personal happiness. And God help anybody because I won't that interrupts that.

And that's what happened in Bethlehem. There was a knock on the door. And can you imagine religion could get to the point where a young couple, it's cold outside.

They probably have limited resource. This girl is in labor. She's only a teenager.

They're knocking at the door. And with all of the religion and all the history and all the scriptures and all the knowledge, nobody is willing to open that door and help this young couple. And that's what religion becomes when it loses the heart of God.

The son of God himself is knocking at that door, vicariously, of course, through his stepfather, Joseph, or his mother, Mary. And so it was in Luke chapter two, in all of the noise, all of the religion, and all that's going on, all the clamor, all the evil speech, all the threats of violence, all the upheaval of society, all the powerless religion in the midst of it all, God found some shepherds out in a field. I think in some measure, some of these shepherds must have said it's better to be out here, at least being still, than to be where people think they're hearing from God and they aren't.

At least it's better to be out here and be quiet than join our voices in the religious clamor that is joined in with the social clamor that is joined in with the political clamor that is joined in with the military clamor, all the speaking for nothing, all the seeking of God that has no power and has no fruit in it. I'd rather be out here in the field and be quiet. And if that's you today, I want to suggest that you're in a really good place right now.

Be still, God says, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. If you're in a place right now where your heart is still, if you're in a place right now where you're saying, I don't want to hear anything unless it's God, I'm tired of it.

I'd rather be on a mountaintop alone than be stuck in that end, listening to all that religion that's all just self-focused and has no power. I'd rather be by myself, just staring at the stars and wondering. And suddenly, on this hillside, the true voice of God comes.

In Luke chapter two, in verse eight says, Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord, a messenger of God, stood before them. And the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were greatly afraid.

Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. There was a messenger in the midst of all that was going on that suddenly appeared before the people, the shepherds, the people who were quiet, who could hear the voice of God. And here's the first thing he said, Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid of Rome. Do not be afraid of the fact that you're to be a shepherd in those days meant you couldn't get a job, literally, in that society. Do not be afraid of your employment or lack of employment.

Do not be afraid of your future. Do not be afraid. First John 4, 18 tells us there is no fear in love.

I want you to know today, you are greatly loved of God, greatly, greatly. You might not have the best job. You might not have the best education.

You might not have victory in every area of your life right now, but I want you to know you are greatly loved of God. God so loved you, he gave his only begotten son for you. Do not be afraid.

You are in the hand of God. No one can take you out of the Father's hand. I will never leave you or forsake you.

Jesus said, I have loved you with an everlasting love. And even though natural love may dissipate on the earth, my love for you will not change. The Lord Christ said to the prophet Isaiah, I have engraved you on the palms of my hand.

When those nails went through his hands on that cross, your name was engraved there and he will never forget you. He didn't die for you out of obligation. He didn't die for you because he felt you'd made a mess and somebody had to straighten it out.

He died for you because he loves you with a love that your mind can't comprehend. One day you will, one day you and I will stand at the throne of God and we will suddenly realize the depth of God's love for us. For the lost, that's what will really make hell, hell.

To have experienced the love of God just for a moment, having seen and understood what could have been theirs in Christ, but having rejected it on this side of eternity. I think the last thing that people will see and remember before they're placed in the darkness that's so thick you can touch it, where your voice doesn't carry when you scream, where there's an absence of all comfort forever. One of the last things they will remember is seeing the depth of the love of God in the eyes of Christ and realizing the decision must be made here, not there.

Here we decide to be yielded to Christ. Do not be afraid for those that are sitting on the fence and not sure if you want to go with God for the rest of your life. Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid. God loves you and wants to have a relationship with you in spite of what you have done or are doing today. In verse 10 he says, the angel said to them, do not be afraid for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

In other words, I've come to give you a message which I will proclaim through you to all people at this difficult time. I've come to give you a message. I've come to make you a message.

I've come to plant something in your heart, in your life, and in your mind that this world knows nothing about. And powerless self-focused religion doesn't know about it either. But I've come to you.

I've come to the shepherds in this generation. I've come to you. You who don't have a reputation to uphold.

You who are wanting quietness and stillness in your life. You who are tired of powerless religion. You who want something of God that only God himself can give, a message.

In verse 12 he says, and this will be a sign to you. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. This will be your sign that God is speaking to you.

You will find the word of God wrapped in the pages of this book in a place that is now opened and accessible to you. Do you understand? For that generation to see the face of God meant to die. Do you know that? God dwelt behind a thick curtain.

If you went behind that curtain uninvited it was instant, sure, and sudden death. That's what it meant to come into the presence of God. But now the angel said to them, this is your sign.

You're going to find the word of God wrapped in a certain garment in a place that you are now invited to come. This is the word the Lord's put on my heart for 2019. You are invited to come into the presence of God.

You're invited. You're invited to see God face to face. Don't be afraid.

The Lord says I'm going to make you a message in a time of social upheaval. I'm going to give you a song that this world knows nothing about. I'm going to give you understanding that those whose religion is all about themselves will never understand.

I'm going to open your heart to something that doesn't come to those who are noisy and involved in clamor. It comes to those who are still and God can speak to their heart. And just as the babe, the word of God in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

Without him, nothing was made that was made. And the word became flesh and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth. We saw him, John says, we beheld the word of God.

This is the good news for you and I today. God says I'm inviting you into my word. I'm inviting you into a place that's now accessible to you to see things that only can be seen in the spirit can only be given of God.

Verse 13 and 14, it says, suddenly there was with the 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. I believe with all my heart that 2019 will be a year of faith and a year of favor. Praise be to God.

A year when we start worshiping the way God wants us to. A year when our focus is on the things of heaven and not on the things of the earth. A year when we begin to sing with angels who burst into song around about the throne of God.

Every time one soul comes to Christ, the angels begin to rejoice. Jesus himself said it. A year when we begin to rejoice with them, we begin to sing the right song about the right things.

A year when our hearts are transformed, a year of faith, a year when we go into this word and believe that the promises God speaks belong to us for a specific reason, that we might become ambassadors of his mercy in our generation. That we might have a message that this is a year of great favor, of great joy to all people. Now the shepherds did what you and I should be doing now.

It says when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, in verse 15, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. So here's your responsibility now. Let us go.

Let us see. No more casual reading of this book. No more five minute devotion in the morning.

No more listening to somebody else's interpretation of scripture. That's great in itself. If it encourages you, by all means continue.

But you get into this book. You're invited here now. You start at Matthew and read through to Revelation and be careful with Revelation because you can get some really weird ideas in that book if you don't understand it.

But you start at Matthew, go to Revelation, go back to Matthew, go back to Revelation, read Psalms and Proverbs, Matthew, back to Revelation. And when you know this New Testament inside out, it will help you to understand the Old Testament then. Read it.

Soak it in. They went to the manger where he was and they looked. They looked to see the face of God.

This is our invitation in 2019. In a time when society is going to be in deeper upheaval than perhaps we've ever seen before. In a time when the world seems to be overflowing its borders.

In a time when perhaps the beginnings of even the heavens being shaken may start. I don't know for sure, but I know it's close. Just as they were invited at that time to behold the face of God, we are now being invited as a people.

And it's in the words of this book, which is the word of God, that you and I will find peace. We'll find a song. We'll find a message.

As a matter of fact, we'll be made into that message. And we will finally get to the point where we are still and we know who God is. We are at rest.

Thank God. So I can't make you read your Bible, but I'm telling you, you're better. You're not going to get through these days in emotion, and you're not going to get through it listening to somebody else's messages.

You have to get a message yourself. You go, you see. You get into this book, but you get into it with this heart.

God loves me. God has invited me here. He's given me a message of joy for all people.

He's given me a song. He's allowing me to worship with angels. So God, I'm going to go and see what it is that my life is going to be and what you have for me in the future.

I'm going into this book in a brand new way, like I have never done before. Father, thank you. Thank you, Lord, for the simplicity of your word, but yet this invitation into the depth of Christ.

Thank you, Lord, for all that you're doing in each of our lives, how you're guiding us, Lord. You're speaking to us if we can hear. You're inviting us into a place of stillness and strength.

Give us the grace, my God. Give us the grace, Lord. Jesus Christ, give us the grace to accept this invitation and to let your purpose and plan for each of our lives be fulfilled.

Bring us to a place of stillness, a place, Lord, where we are at rest in our mind and in our spirit, where we can sleep at night, not worried about tomorrow. Only you can do that. And Father, I thank you with all of my heart that you will, that you will help each of us, Lord, to become all that you're calling us to be in 2019.

We don't know if that's the year of your return, but it's very, very soon, very, very soon. You said in the Psalm that just at the break of dawn, you will help your church, your people. So God, help us now.

Help us to get ready. Help us to prepare. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Here's a simple altar invitation today. In 2019, I'm going into this book, and I'm going to find the favor of God for my life. I'm going to find the promises of God for my life, and I'm going to let my life become the message that God intends my life to be.

By the strength and by the grace of God. If you try in your own strength, you won't do it. But if the Holy Spirit is leading you and moving upon you, you will.

Praise be to God. Let's stand. If that's you, would you just come? And we're going to pray together just for a moment.

Just join me here at this altar. Say, Pastor, I hear you. I hear you.

And 2019 is going to be a year of faith for me. Now, listen to me, those that have come to the altar today. You might not feel like you're the biggest player in the kingdom of God.

Maybe you feel like you're out on a mountainside all by yourself. But the Bible says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And you can't hear the word of God until your mind is still.

When your mind is racing, you can read your Bible, but you can't hear it. Jesus said through David, the Lord leads me beside the still waters. If you just ask him today.

He'll lead you into that place. And in that place, you'll start to feed you. And in that place, you start to see promises.

I know it from experience. You start to see God speaking something about you and to you and through you that you never anticipated before. And he takes your life to a whole new place.

And in that place, miracles start to happen. And people's hearts start to open. And God takes you places you never dreamt you would go to.

Gives you words you never dreamt you'd ever speak. As a matter of fact, you're not qualified to speak them. It's all him.

But it requires that stillness, that stillness, that confidence, that quiet confidence in the heart. God, you love me. I'm in your hand.

I'm safe. I'm safe with you. And you're inviting me to see you.

And in seeing you, I start to see myself because you live in me. And you'll take me to a brand new place in my life. Praise God.

The greatest preachers of this last day are not going to be the high-profile people anymore. It's going to be you. It's going to be you.

That's the secret of God. It's going to be you. It's going to be the whole church.

It's going to be the body of Christ everywhere that loves him. That's going to be the last day message. It's going to be everyone with a lit lamp.

Everyone calling. The bridegroom is coming. Come to meet him.

So don't get discouraged by looking at yourself because it's not about you. He called you. He's calling to you.

It's about Jesus. It's not about you. So Father, thank you, Lord, for my brothers and sisters, Lord, at this altar today, and those who are at the altar in their hearts.

We want to be a people of faith in this last time. The people with a song of people with a quiet confidence. The people that the Apostle Peter spoke about that others would be coming and saying, give us a reason for the hope that you have.

Tell us why you have such peace. So, Lord, thank you, God. Our part is to behold you.

Your part is to change us. So, Lord, we thank you. We thank you for the simplicity of this moment.

That as we go into your word, you say you will start to speak to every heart. None of us will be the same just even months from now. You'll begin to change us.

God, thank you for what you're doing. Thank you for bringing us your word. Thank you for clearing up the fog of this moment we live in.

Thank you for bringing us back into focus and making it simple. Thank you for loving us, Lord, when we don't even love ourselves. You love us, Lord.

Thank you for giving us the example that you did in scripture that you could have gone to anybody in the world and you went to shepherds on the hillside. God almighty. And you don't change.

You're the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so here we are. We're the shepherds on a mountainside.

We're tired of all the noise and the powerlessness. We just want you, Lord. We just want your voice.

Our hearts are open. Help us to be still now. To be still so we can hear your voice.

God, we thank you. Thank you for the miracles that are going to happen right at this altar. The lives that will be transformed.

The homes that will find peace that have been looking for it for years. Thank you for the ministries that will be born. Thank you for the songs that will be written and sung.

Thank you, God, for lives that will be transformed. We give you the praise and all the glory. All of the glory, Lord.

All of the glory. All of the glory belongs to you.

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