DAY 17

LUKE 2:15–18

When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, that the Lord has made known to us." So they hurried off and located Mary and Joseph, and found the baby lying in a manger. When they saw him, they related what they had been told about this child, and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said.

The shepherds had just experienced a wonderful moment while they were out among the flocks. Their routine nighttime became a brightly lit, enthusiastic, worshipful moment. The good news they had waited for, the coming of the Messiah, was announced to them!

And then ... the music was over. The lights went back out. And the shepherds faced a decision. They could choose to sit and bask in the moment. After all, it was a thrilling moment. The army of the Lord of Hosts had appeared to them, bringing Scripture like Psalm 46 to life. Each shepherd had heard and seen things beyond imagining; they now had a great story to tell to their children and grandchildren.

Or they could reject the moment entirely. After all, who would believe them that the sky filled with angelic beings? Are they sure that's what happened, anyway?

Instead, they took the third route: They went looking. They did not sit in the shiny moment of shouts and songs. They did not circle up and decide to just let it all drop. They went looking for themselves. The text says they "hurried off" and found Mary, Joseph, and Jesus exactly as they had heard.

These days, we tend to find ourselves as followers of Jesus hurrying off about many things. Working, juggling busy schedules, checking off the Christmas to-do lists, running around after kids, serving extra hours at church. Occasionally, something causes us to pause, look up at the heavens, and remember that there is something bigger than us. What, then, do we do?

Let us consider that our best hurrying off would be in looking for Jesus. We will benefit from realizing that He is not found in the holiday lights and the piles of stuff. He is exactly where He came to be: in the midst of people. Christmas is, remember, the celebration that God Himself put on flesh and dwelt among us, as John 1:14 reminds us. And in our midst is where we still find Him today. We find Jesus near to the brokenhearted and seeking the sheep that have gone astray.

REFLECT

Does Advent feel stressed and hurried or slow and peaceful? What things are getting in the way of you slowing down and worshiping Jesus this Advent? What's one thing you can do this week to Give More of yourself relationally to the people in your life, to soak up the memories and to be present with one another?

PRAY

Jesus, in the midst of the ever-accelerating world I live in, help me set aside the chaotic hurrying. Help me to remember with every light, every song, that the only hurrying I should do matches that of the shepherds: that I would hurry to be in your presence. Amen.