

# P Levy, Christmas 20221211 carol service

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] I should have told you this. I should have told you this. My name is Paul Levy.! Anyone who's been in a school play will tell you that you know that your character isn't important if it doesn't have a name.

And so if you try out children for the Christmas production and you land the part of traveling salesman number five or camel number four, don't expect a starring role. Don't expect to sing the ballad. Don't expect to get the girl. Let's get to work at memorizing your one or two lines. If you don't have a name, you're not an important character in the story.

By this logic, the shepherds of Luke chapter 2, they're not important, are they? They're inconsequential characters in the story of our Lord's nativity.

They most certainly had names. But we don't know them. We don't know their names because they don't show up in any other place and at any other time in the Bible.

[ 1 : 37 ] They seem never to have interacted again with Jesus or with the apostles. To the best of anyone's knowledge, they never became martyrs for faith and so well known.

Luke probably wrote his account and he got the information from Mary. And so it's pretty likely that Mary didn't even know the name of these shepherds who showed up to meet her baby at the child Christ.

They were just random shepherds who came and worshipped and left and were never seen again. In the grand scheme of things, it doesn't seem to matter all that much that the shepherds did this. So if Mary hadn't been the mother of God, then there's no birth of God in flesh. If Joseph hadn't been the adoptive father of the Lord Jesus, then Jesus wouldn't have been direct descendant of King David like he'd been promised.

And the rightful king of the Jews. Jesus is both of those things though, isn't he? Even if the shepherds never managed to turn up. So on the surface, these nameless shepherds, shepherds without a name, they are rather unimportant.

[ 2 : 59 ] They don't matter. And yet according to the very angels of heaven, they matter just as much as Mary and Joseph because they matter to God.

And they are precisely the reason that God's son has come into this world. So with all the glory of heaven shining around those nameless shepherds in the fields, an angel comes to them and declares to them, For unto you, unto you nameless shepherds, is born this day in the city of David, Bethlehem, a saviour, a wrestler, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be the sign to him. You'll find this baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. And so when you see, God knew the name of those nameless shepherds.

He knew who they were. He knew what their sins were. He knew how they turned away from his word.

How they'd embraced death with their rebellion. He knew every evil that they'd done. He knew every wrong thought that had gone through their minds. Every hateful word that was on their lips.

[ 4 : 17 ] Every selfish deed created from their hands. And God knew that according to his law, these men deserve to be told on the day of judgment, when they will meet with God, that he didn't know them.

He knew them not. And therefore, these shepherds, they deserve no place in his kingdom. But instead of condemning them, God chose to love them.

Instead of treating them like nameless strangers, like nobodies, God chose to treat them as his own beloved children. And so he sent his son into the world for them.

Out of his love, he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to die for the sins of these men. To cleanse them with his blood. To make them right.

To make them holy and worthy of eternal life. Out of love, God the Father sent his child. Born in Bethlehem's manger. And to die on Calvary's cross.

[ 5 : 20 ] And so when that happened, these nameless nobodies were covered. They were covered in Jesus' blood as their saviour.

In that moment, the shepherds became known, eternally known, by the God who still calls them by their names. Even if we never know who they are, God knows who they are.

And it was for those shepherds as it is for you. Just as God didn't need those shepherds to bring Jesus into the world and win salvation for mankind, he doesn't need you.

He doesn't need me to accomplish his good and gracious purposes. God can create faith in the hearts of the lost without you and without me. God can grow his church without me and without you. He can protect and defend and nurture and strengthen the church without you. God can bring rain upon the earth and give us our daily bride without you and without me. He doesn't need us.

[ 6 : 31 ] In the production line of life, by all accounts, let me break it to you, you are a character without a name, like me.

Likewise, you and I don't deserve to know for God to know who you are. You, like me, are a sinner. And you've manifested your hatred of God through your greed and lust and pride and anger and cowardice, your weakness in the face of doing what is right.

And according to God's law, I have earned death and condemnation through my rebellion and my iniquities, just like those nameless shepherds.

And you deserve and I deserve for God to insist that he doesn't recognize me as one of his own. I deserve God to tell me on that day when I will meet with him, you have no place in my kingdom.

I don't know you. I don't know your name. But the message of Christmas is he knows your name. He knows your name.

[ 7 : 45 ] So the word that the angel spoke to those shepherds on the night of his birth, he also speaks to you tonight. And this is God's message for you tonight. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a saviour who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you that you'll find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. And so tonight, go to that manger through faith and look at the infant face of that baby lying there, Jesus Christ.

And there, in him, you will see that no matter how insignificant you are to the world, you are not insignificant to God. And so even when people who should cherish and should love you seem to have forgotten all about you, God hasn't.

and even with all the bustle of Christmas season when it seems that the world maybe has got no use for you and you've been left behind and you're unknown to the countless faces you see on the streets and throughout your day, your face is not unknown, God.

And no matter how many people in this world don't know your name, God does. and he has sent his only begotten son into this world to give you his own name.

[ 9 : 15 ] So there, in the face of this baby, in the face of this little child in Bethlehem's manger, you see that God has chosen to know you and love you. He sent Christ to be born for you, to die for you, to rise again for you.

Out of love, God the Father has sent his son to die for your sins, to take away your greed and your lust and your pride and your anger and your malice.

Out of love, the Father sent that child to become the man who would cover you with his blood. And in that moment, you were covered in the name of Jesus.

In that moment, as Christ gives his life for people like you and I, you cease to be unimportant. Faceless, nameless.

In that moment, you recognize that you matter. In that moment, God gives you the right to be clothed in the very name of God.

[ 10 : 26 ] The right to wear a face that God recognizes as belonging to his own beloved child. And so God, in the message of Christmas, declares to you, you matter.

You matter to him. He will always know who you are. He will always call you by name. And so in the end, it doesn't matter, does it, whether we know the names of the shepherds.

because with the words from to you this day in the city of David is born for you a saviour, God proclaims he knows the names of those shepherds.

And with those same words, God proclaims that he knows your name as well. In other words, through that proclamation, through that announcement, God proclaimed if you are a character without a name, and in the production line of the Bible and this life, you might feel you haven't got the name.

That doesn't mean you are essential, it doesn't mean you are unimportant to God. Because through the words of the angel, what God is saying is that in this very production in which Christ is the star, it was put on for you.

[ 11 : 49 ] It was put on this production by God so that you could be known by him. The reason that the play has been staged is for your benefit. The reason that Mary and Joseph were cast in the roles they were was for your glory.

The reason that Christ was born was to show you that God knows your name and out of love he has given his own. And that if you will come to him and you will cry to him and you will humble yourself before him you can be given the name of Jesus.

He's given you the right to live forever. Because the child that is born this day has lived and died for your sins and he has risen for your justification.

He came so that your name can be written in the book of life. I was back in Swansea this week visiting my parents and my mother and I went into the pharmacy I parked the car and so my mum went in before me to the chemist and when I walked into the pharmacy my mother was standing talking to a woman who's probably I don't know 10-15 years older than me and as I walked towards my mother my mother pointed at me and said to the woman you know who this is don't you?

You know who this is don't you? The woman looked slightly awkward and said I don't think so. My mother said yes you do. Yes you do.

[ 13 : 24 ] And there was more awkward silence. And the woman nervously replied no I don't think I do. My mother said this is Steve. And I said I'm a poor man.

It was all very embarrassing. The woman was leading school with my brother Steve she was actually in school with my sister Anne. The medicine could not come quickly enough we waited very awkwardly for the medicine but my mother just carried on regardless.

It was just embarrassing she didn't know me. She didn't know my name. It was plain embarrassing not being known. Don't you know who I am? Not to be known it's embarrassing isn't it?

but not to be known by God is not embarrassing it's a tragedy because one day you and one day I will meet him.

There's no need for you to be unknown this Christmas. The message of Christmas is that you can be known by God. God has sent his son Jesus Christ into this world so that you can be known by him.

[ 14 : 37 ] it's the most astonishing gift maybe that you've never thought about it before it may be that you've written it off as just sentimentality but it is the most wonderful news that Christmas tells you that you can know God and you can be known by God and you can be known by God.

I'd love you to explore that I'd love you to talk with the person that brought you. We'd love to welcome you back. There's surely nothing more important there this Christmas than to know the God who made you and be known by him.

Let's pray together. today in the town of David a saviour a rescuer has been born to you he is Christ the Lord and this will be a sign to you you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Heavenly Father we thank you for this wonderful news this glorious news that you God have sent your son into the world as a rescuer to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my rebellion and so Heavenly Father help us to come in humility to the Lord Jesus help us to trust him help us recognize that this baby lying in the manger is both king and lord may we this Christmas time know the joy of being known by you and knowing you give to us the gift of faith and repentance we pray in Jesus name Amen I expect there's going to be many questions that you have I'd love to chat to you about that the people who invited you they'd love to chat to you about that and if they don't well keep talking to them anyway but there's lots and lots of questions surely don't let another Christmas carol series go past without thinking and talking about these things! I'll see you