

# SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELDS

By Bill Pugh



To put his life on the line against all marauders, keeping even the tiniest lamb safe. A pouch containing a small amount of food, relying on nature to provide the rest. The shepherd represents the poorest of the poor, yet called by God to witness to and announce the birth of Jesus.

An angel stood before them and told them the most astounding news: *"To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you; you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."*

When the angel had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another: *"Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing which has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."*

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they heard this, they made known what had been told them about this child.

How different his entry into the world. No media camped outside waiting for an appearance. No picture of the parents and newborn leaving. A child showered with gifts and attention from the very beginning. Yet Jesus entered the world in a stable set apart for animals, unheralded by society until lowly shepherds in the fields minding their flocks glimpsed the wink of heaven. An angel announced to them first the birth of this special child. With haste they came to the manger

and found the little family just as the angel had said. Immediately they made known what they had seen and heard and the shepherds returned to the fields praising and glorifying God for all they had witnessed.

Later Luke explains the child's development thus: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in favour with God and man."

*"I am the good shepherd," Jesus said. "And I lay down my life for the sheep I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."*

In this era of COVID-19, we are shocked at the price of this terrible disease. Millions have suffered and died. We feel helpless and hopeless in the face of such loss. But as the people of hope, we are reassured that not one is lost or abandoned without the knowledge and loving care of the Good Shepherd. It was for each one, in person and by name, that Jesus came, suffered, died and rose again and there is room, welcome and safety in his fold for all the sheep.