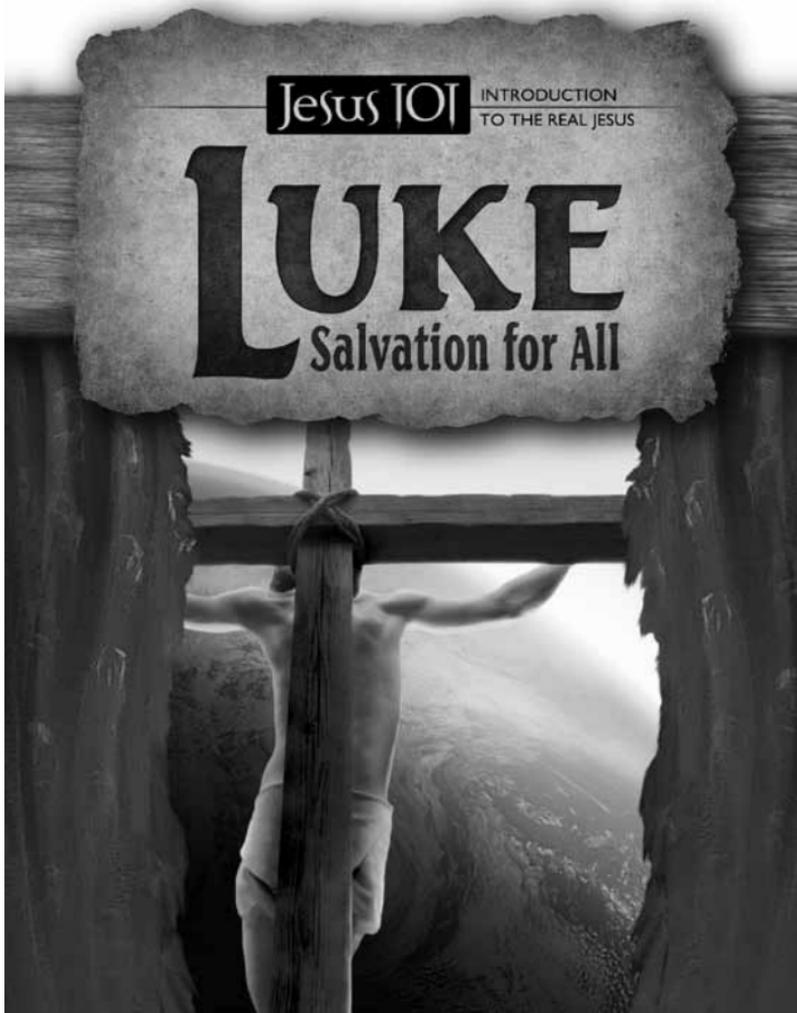


Jesus 101 INTRODUCTION  
TO THE REAL JESUS

# LUKE

Salvation for All



ELIZABETH VIERA TALBOT



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# DEDICATION

I dedicate this booklet to  
all the donors of the  
Jesus 101 Biblical Institute  
who, by their generosity, are  
making possible the spreading  
of the good news of salvation  
throughout the world.  
I will be forever thankful for  
this dream come true!

To my parents,  
Dr. & Mrs. Juan Carlos and Alicia Viera,  
whose patience and trust in the Lord  
during their suffering with cancer  
has taught me more than they know.

To my husband, Patrick, who  
believes in this dream  
and shares with me the indescribable joy  
of our gospel-centered ministry.

And as always to Jesus,  
my Kinsman-Redeemer; my Savior!

I can't wait to spend eternity with all of you!

**Other books by  
Elizabeth Viera Talbot**

*Matthew: Prophecy Fulfilled*

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*Surprised by Love*

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# Salvation for the “Fearful”

The flawless plan proceeded with incredible speed and remarkable efficiency. The rescue of all thirty-three miners trapped under seven hundred thousand tons of rock put an end to the longest underground entrapment in the history of the world. The saga, which started on August 5, 2010, when the mine collapsed, dragged on for sixty-nine days as the world watched spellbound in solidarity with the Chilean people and its government, while the rescuers continued their restless efforts. Can you imagine being alive, nearly half a mile underground (2,041 feet), knowing that there is absolutely nothing you could do to get out? Help could only come from above, and it did. No cost was too great. It was after seventeen days with no contact with the miners that the word that they were still alive circled the globe. For fifty-two days after that the country placed all of its resources in bringing the trapped miners to the surface. Nothing like this had ever been successfully attempted before.

Meanwhile, the men underground had only two choices: faith or fear. And they chose faith over fear. As they waited, they prayed. One of them, Sepulveda, described his choice: “I was with God and with the devil. And I reached out for God.” On October 12, global audiences in the hundreds of millions—myself included—watched the live TV images showing the first rescuer arriving at the bottom, filmed by the miners. Just over twenty-four hours later, *all* thirty-three miners and all the rescuers were on the surface, celebrating in joy beyond words. “I can’t describe the joy we are all feeling right now,” said one of the miners. I can’t even describe what I felt, and I was just watching it on TV! Two words kept coming up in the interviews that followed: *all* and *joy*. *All* had been rescued: the healthy and the sick, the strong and the weak. *All* had

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been saved through the plan designed from above. The resolution of the rescuers to reach the trapped miners overcame all the obstacles they found. And at the end, only pure *joy* remained. *All* had been saved from sure death.

The Gospel of Luke was written to announce a rescue of even greater magnitude! The human race was buried under sin, with no possibility of eternal survival. Help could only come from above. “And it did!” announces Luke in the most excited tone. The Savior of the world came down to fulfill Heaven’s plan to rescue the world! As you can imagine, this Gospel is filled with joy and excitement, because no cost was too great for Heaven, and salvation has been achieved *for ALL!*

### **One Savior for ALL**

Luke’s portrait of Jesus is: One Savior for ALL. This Gospel, the longest book of the New Testament, uses the nouns *Savior* and *salvation* more than any other Gospel. God designed a plan to rescue us and Jesus came to fulfill it! But who could be saved? The strong, the learned, the religious? “I am glad you asked,” says Luke, “Salvation is for ALL!” And he will narrate this whole Gospel in a way that will make his point loud and clear. One of the fascinating ways in which he makes his point is by telling a story about a man which is then followed by another story about a woman. His incorporation of women narratives in parallel to men stories highlights that even women are included in the good news! Go, Luke! A few of these men-women pairs are Zechariah and Mary (Luke 1), Simeon and Anna (Luke 2), the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4), the centurion of Capernaum and the widow of Nain (Luke 7), a man losing a sheep and a woman losing a coin (Luke 15), et cetera.

Luke’s desire to include every human being in the plan of salvation may be observed in the way he presents the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23–38). But perhaps the most radical of all his theological proposals is the fact that salvation includes even those who don’t seem to qualify: the lowly, the poor,

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and the outcast. Story after story will usher in a new era of reversals when it comes to qualifying for eternal life. The outcast is the blessed one, and the proud is sent off empty: “He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; and sent away the rich empty-handed” (Luke 1:52, 53). In this Gospel, you and I find hope and a new song of deliverance. The Savior has come for such as us.

### **Fearful people shouting for JOY!**

A great example of Luke’s emphasis is the juxtaposition of an *important* old priest with an *ordinary* young woman in the first chapter of the Gospel. Please take a moment to read these two stories together in Luke 1:5–80. What a fantastic comparison! Perhaps one of the most striking points is that both are “fearful.” Both stories are structured so similarly: introduction of parents, angel Gabriel comes to announce a miraculous birth, both have obstacles to childbearing, both respond with fear and are told “FEAR NOT!” Both are promised a son, given the name and the role of their son, and given a sign before Gabriel departs. Both Jesus, the Savior, and John, the forerunner, would be miracle children. John, because his mother was old and barren; Jesus because He would be conceived through the Holy Spirit, and His mother was a virgin. Both Zacharias and Mary would eventually trade their fear for JOY, as each one of them would erupt in joyful singing to the Lord (Luke 1:46–55; 68–79). As a matter of fact, this trading of fear for joy happens constantly throughout this Gospel. Lots of celebrations going on!

Luke believes in prayer and in the power of the Holy Spirit to internalize the reality of the salvation offered. When confronted with the immensity of God’s rescue plan, everyone becomes extremely joyful and they choose faith over fear, erupting in praises. May this be your experience throughout our time together in this booklet. May you choose FAITH over FEAR and may your heart burn with a joyful WOO-HOO!

# Salvation for the “Marginalized”

**H**ave you ever received such very good news that you simply could not contain it? News so incredibly good that you just had to go out and tell the whole world about what had just happened to you? It happened to me. Both of my parents went through cancer surgeries and long-term treatments. The first brush of my family with this terrible disease was my father’s stomach cancer. Doctors discovered a huge tumor and suggested a very radical surgery, which would leave only 10 percent of his stomach intact. The day of the surgery arrived . . .

We all went to the hospital and were told of an approximate time when the surgery would end. We knew this was a high-risk procedure and we were given a little pager with a small screen through which we could receive messages while my dad was in surgery. Hours went by very slowly . . . and we were not getting any messages. Finally there was a vibrating beep; we anxiously looked at the screen: “still in surgery.” The appointed time had come and gone and we started to wonder about the success of the surgery.

After several hours had gone by, when it was way past the original estimated time, we finally saw the doctor appear at the far end of the waiting room. We stood up. We were trying to read every possible expression in his face to tell us what the news was before he started to speak. But we couldn’t read anything. We had this eerie feeling; it felt like he was walking in slow motion. The time it took him to cross the room seemed like years. My family made a semicircle around him and then he spoke.

“Good news,” he said, and then he went on and on, explaining the procedure and the reasons why they thought it was a success. But I don’t remember a word he said then. I only remember the

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first two words: “Good news!” Good News! I felt like telling, no, yelling the good news to every single person in that waiting room! The cancer is out! The cancer is out! Good news!

In this chapter, we will relive the moment in which the heavenly angels announced the greatest news ever proclaimed to human beings: “Good news! Good news! The Savior is born!” And most amazingly this good news is “for all the people” (Luke 2:10), including shepherds!

### **The fullness of time**

And the day arrived . . . after thousands of years of waiting, and waiting, and waiting for the good news. Luke is the only Gospel writer who gives us the last piece of the puzzle of Jesus’ birth. There were many prophecies that foretold the birth of Jesus in the Jewish Scriptures, and everything was lined up for the appointed time. A Savior would come and crush Satan’s head (Genesis 3:15); the blessings would be for all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3); He would be of the Davidic line (2 Samuel 7:12–16), and many more. But there was one problem: the prophecy said that the coming Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), but Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth. Luke unveils the mystery by telling us that “a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. . . . And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city” (Luke 2:1, 3). Isn’t it amazing that God already knew about this event hundreds of years before and revealed it to His prophet? What an incredible God we serve!

“Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David” (verse 4). We are starting to see God’s design behind all this. Everyone thought that Caesar Augustus was calling the shots, but in reality there was a much greater design behind it all. The God of heaven was accomplishing His purposes: to save the world! So many times I would like to see behind the veil, behind the circumstances that sometimes make no

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sense! One day Jesus will show me the view from above! I always marvel at God’s ability to make all things (yes, all things, even the census decreed by a Roman emperor) turn out for the good of those who love Him (see Romans 8:28).

Luke has a great interest in history, and in his Gospel he gives many historical references which would allow his audience to perfectly locate the times and places that he is talking about. The fact that the census is an important piece of the puzzle is highlighted by its repeated use (see Luke 2:1, 2, 3, 5). Because of the census, each family will head to their ancestral city; and Joseph and Mary, being descendants of David, will head to Bethlehem (which means “house of bread”). But what does Bethlehem have to do with King David? Well, I am *so* glad you asked! David was born in Bethlehem! And all his family was from Bethlehem (you may read the fascinating story of his anointing in Bethlehem in 1 Samuel 16). Don’t you love how everything starts making sense in the big scale when we connect the dots? God has acted in patterns (seasons and geography) so that we wouldn’t miss the coming of the Savior!

While they were in Bethlehem, “the days were completed for her to give birth” (Luke 2:6). Of course, God already knew that, hundreds of years before, “the days” refer not only to the nine months of pregnancy, but to “the days” from eternity, when God designed a plan of salvation before the foundation of the world! Luke uses the concept of time to constantly highlight that God IS IN CHARGE and that His timing is perfect and, may I add, very different from ours. Mary gave birth to her “firstborn” (which carries many theological connotations) and she laid Him in a manger, a place where animals and humans would share humble accommodations. Luke is very interested in those who are at the edges of society: the poor, the outcasts, the outsiders, the destitute, and the marginalized. And Jesus will share their company out there from the very beginning, “because there was no room for them in the inn” (verse 7).

NOW, the time has come to declare the GOOD NEWS! To whom will heaven announce this news, the greatest of all time? To

the rich and famous? To the theologians or the intellectuals? Who will be chosen to behold the most impressive heavenly scene ever revealed to human eyes? Perhaps the ones who need it most.

### **Unworthy witnesses**

Leave it to heaven to choose shepherds as the first recipients of the good news! That God would choose the lowly and the humble is a Lukan theme, highlighted from the very beginning of his Gospel (see Luke 1:52, 53). There were two groups of people that were not allowed as witnesses in a court of law in the first century: shepherds and women. Isn't it interesting that Luke mentions that the first witnesses of Jesus' birth were shepherds and the first witnesses of His resurrection were women (Luke 24:1-12)? God reveals Himself to the needy, the least, the last, the ones who are longing for something new. God reveals Himself to the unworthy, because the only thing that recommends us to God is our need.

The term "shepherds" creates an *inclusio* (a narrative sandwich, like bookends, starting and ending a narrative with the same topic) in the announcement of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:8, 20). Even though their social status is at the bottom of the strata of power and privilege, they are highly favored of heaven. This night the angels will bypass the temple, where they were expected to appear (see Luke 1:11), and instead will come to the farm. God does not approve of religious monopolies. In contrast to other ancient religions and their gods, the Creator is not a God of buildings but of people. He will send His agents to wherever there are teachable and humble hearts, ready to embrace the good news of Jesus Christ.

As the shepherds keep watch over the flocks at night (Luke 2:8), in the same region where a thousand years earlier another young shepherd by the name of David watched over his father's flocks, an angel of the Lord suddenly appears to them. The angel brings the best news ever heard by human ears. But they don't know that; therefore, "they were terribly frightened" (verse 9). Many times we respond with fear when we don't understand the plan. In this case,

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the original text tells us that they experienced a MEGA FEAR (the term for “great” in Greek is *mega*, and for “fear” is *phobos*, from where we get our English word *phobia*). You know that feeling, don’t you? You see something, or you hear some news, and you react to it with great fear that turns your stomach into a knot, makes your palms sweaty, and sends your head spinning. Something that comes suddenly, unexpectedly, and without much explanation is scary. We have all experienced *mega fear* in our lives, haven’t we? But this time, the angel will explain God’s plan and invite the shepherds to trade their *mega fear* for MEGA JOY!

### Understanding the angelic announcement

In order to fully understand the force with which Luke narrates the following event, we must first take a look at Caesar Augustus. Octavian was the adoptive heir of Julius Caesar. In power from approximately 31 B.C. to A.D. 14, he received the title of “Augustus” in 27 B.C. As a matter of fact, after 27 B.C., his official name was *Imp(erator) Caesar divi f(ilius)* (“son of a god”) *Augustus*. The last word in his name suggested that he was something above human. During his rule there was a great emphasis on peace; he established what became known as the *pax romana* (the Roman peace), and the increased safety made empire-wide travel possible, which led to prosperity. That Jesus would be born under Augustus reign (verse 1) is more than a coincidence! This was a time for travel, for business, for trade and commerce. It is estimated that the Romans built about fifty-three thousand miles of roads spanning from as far north as Scotland to the east at Euphrates—the greatest Roman contributions to land travel. This was the *perfect* time for good news to be spread! And heaven had been preparing for it.

Caesar Augustus was venerated for his achievements. He was referred to as “the savior of the world” and an inscription that refers to his birthday reads, “Good news/gospel (*euangelia*) to the world!” NOW . . . the angels are coming to announce the birth of Someone much greater than Caesar Augustus! How will they highlight that

fact? What superlatives will they use to announce to the shepherds the birth of the greatest Savior and Lord known to all mankind?

### **The announcement: Good news of MEGA JOY!**

“And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened [*mega fear*]” (verse 9). It seems normal that they experienced *mega fear*, because they didn’t understand what they were seeing. But immediately the angel explained the purpose of his visit, using some of the most amazing words recorded in the whole Bible:

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (verses 10–12).

In other words: WOO-HOO! “The time has come! And the news is greater than any good news you have heard before!” says the angel. Let me explain: because the shepherds felt *mega fear*, the angel starts his announcement with “do not be afraid.” This is the most common exhortation in the whole Bible. God is always sending us this message: don’t be afraid. I guess we are pretty fearful people, and He is always reminding us of His presence with us and His intentions toward us, and overall HIS SALVATION for us!

Then the angel goes on: “I announce good news [*euangelizomai*]” (see verse 10). OK, the shepherds could have thought, We have heard of “good news” before, every time Augustus has a birthday we hear the proclamation of “good news” everywhere. “Oh, no!” says the angel, “this is good news of GREAT [*mega*] JOY!” (see verse 10). There is nothing like it! Trade your *mega fear* for MEGA JOY!

And this is not just for the Romans! “[It] will be for *all the people*” (verse 10; emphasis supplied)! And there is more! Today in the city of

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David (as the prophecy pointed out) “for you” (verse 11), yes, it is for you! Can you believe it? It’s not just for the intellectuals, the know-it-alls, the high-status, the theologians, the Jews, NO! For you, shepherds, marginalized, at the edges of society! For you, dear reader, and for me! Woo-hoo! A SAVIOR has been born for us!

OK, the shepherds could have thought, We have heard of a “savior” before. We know about the savior Caesar Augustus. “Oh, no!” says the angel, “this is the real SAVIOR, the ONE the world has been waiting for!”

“There has been born for you a Savior, who is *CHRIST THE LORD*” (verse 11; emphasis supplied). YES! The anointed ONE, the Messiah, THE Lord! Your Savior! Much greater than Augustus! MEGA Savior!

The announcement of the angel follows the same pattern as all the previous birth announcements in Luke: appearance, fear, announcement of birth, sign, and outcome. The sign that the angel gives the shepherds relates to the humble beginnings of our Savior: “This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (verse 12). A manger? What a paradox! The Savior of the world in a manger? But the shepherds were in for even more surprises . . .

### **Peace on earth!**

Music was a big part of the Roman culture. As a matter of fact, many official announcements and occasions were accompanied by music. And just in case the shepherds were still wondering about the MEGA news, much greater than the one about Augustus’s birth . . .

“Oh,” says the angel, “you were expecting a choir? What you have seen before in the Roman celebrations is no choir at all. THIS IS A CHOIR!” “Suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God . . .” (verse 13). How about THAT for a real choir?

“Oh, yes,” adds the angel, “you are used to hearing about the *pax romana*, the roman peace accomplished by Augustus. Well,

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listen to OUR song to understand what the REAL SAVIOR has accomplished!”

“Glory to God in the highest,  
And *on earth peace* among men with whom  
He is pleased” (verse 14; emphasis supplied).

Peace for the whole earth? Not just Rome? That’s right! Everyone on earth could be at peace with God through Jesus Christ! Talk about good news of *mega joy*! Sometimes I imagine the angels’ rehearsals spanning hundreds of years in preparation for that very night. I imagine them asking every one hundred years, “Is this the night?” and God answering, “No, not yet, keep rehearsing.” Can you imagine their excitement when they finally got to sing THE SONG?

Don’t you feel like singing by now? I sure do. In the Gospel of Luke, the common response to the revelation of the good news is to PRAISE the Lord! *Joy* is a big word for Luke and he repeats it many times. When you realize what God has done for you, I don’t think you can help it! Joy and praise fills your heart like an overflowing fountain! Practice praising the Lord and you’ll see how your perspective changes and your day gets better!

This is the third of four songs in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke! Everyone is singing! These four hymns became known by their first Latin words:

The <i>Magnificat</i>	Luke 1:46–55	sang by Mary
The <i>Benedictus</i>	Luke 1:68–79	sang by Zechariah
<i>Gloria in Excelsis</i>	Luke 2:14	sang by angels
The <i>Nunc Dimittis</i>	Luke 2:29–32	sang by Simeon

I feel like singing “Glory to God” myself! The shepherds went straight to Bethlehem and found everything exactly as it had been told to them (for details, read Luke 2:15–19). Yes, they went in a

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hurry (verse 16) to *see* the good news of mega joy that they had *heard* about. And they found the Baby, the Savior, the Christ. We are told about how they were transformed when they saw Him. No trace of fear, just praise. “The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them” (verse 20). They became the first evangelists in Luke, as they repeated what was told to them (verse 17) and praised God for what they heard and saw. Don’t you wish we could have seen what they saw?

### Good news for you and me

The truth is that we CAN experience what the shepherds experienced. This announcement was only the beginning of the good news of mega joy. Jesus was born to give His life for us, and He did accomplish what He came to do when He died on the cross (Luke 23) and resurrected on the third day (Luke 24). Everyone who believes in Him may have peace with God, right now, at this very moment. Accept Him as YOUR Savior and He will give you the peace of His presence, the forgiveness of your sins, and the assurance of eternal life. That is the reason why He was born on that fateful night.

The English term *gospel* comes from the Old English *godspell*, which means “good news,” and it is a translation from the Greek noun *euangelion*. Even though this Greek term was used in secular settings to announce the birthday of Augustus, or other official announcements, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) used the term, many years before Jesus’ birth, to announce God’s ultimate deliverance of His people. For example, “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings *good news*, who announces peace and brings *good news* of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’ ” (Isaiah 52:7; see also Isaiah 61:1, 2).

When Jesus started inviting people to believe in the *good news/gospel* (see Mark 1:15; Luke 4:18), His listeners knew that the Jewish Scriptures (translated to Greek) announced the “day of salvation”

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with this term. Eventually, “the *gospel*” became Paul’s favorite term (see Romans 1:16, 17) to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ: His perfect life, His perfect death, and His perfect resurrection on our behalf. The Savior announced by the angels that day, is the Savior proclaimed by the Christian church: Jesus Christ.

You may have days when you feel unworthy, unqualified, undeserving. Days in which you feel like a failure, fragile and weak, forgotten by the whole world and even those who are supposed to care. Days when the phone does not ring and the mailbox is empty. Well, in those days . . . remember that salvation is for those who feel “marginalized” by others. They are never forgotten by God. The angels bypassed the temple and went straight to the farm. They bypassed the theologians and went to the shepherds. Because the only ones who can really get the *good news* are those who understand the *bad news*: we can’t, God can, God did!

May you hurry to the feet of our Savior, Jesus Christ, today! Please join me, and the shepherds, in praising God for what He has done on our behalf by inserting your name in the blanks:

“\_\_\_\_\_ went back, glorifying and praising God for all that \_\_\_\_\_ had heard” (Luke 2:20).

Trade your *mega fear* for MEGA JOY! And start singing now. We will be joining the angelic chorus!