

GOD'S FAVORED ONES

I. Gathered II. Preserved

Luke 2:8-12

TEXT: *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

Duck Dynasty is a cable TV "reality show" that has stirred up a national controversy. The TV show features the Robertson family that became wealthy by producing and selling products for duck hunters. The primary product that launched them in to a successful business was the Duck Commander, a duck call.

Recently, the patriarch of the family, Phil Robertson, was interviewed by GQ Magazine and was asked about his beliefs concerning the morals of our country. While I won't repeat Mr. Robertson's earthy way of expressing himself, I will quote the Scripture passage that he quoted as evidence that his beliefs were based on Scriptural truth. He quoted from 1 Corinthians 6: ***Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*** Immediately, the "gay community" and their Hollywood and mainstream media supporters let out a cry that is still rising in intensity. Their cry: HATE SPEECH!

Since Mr. Robertson quoted God's Word, the cry against what he said is a cry against God Himself. God and Mr. Robertson are not Christians, but vicious vile and hateful. Of course, none of those accusing Duck Dynasty of being despicable haters and racists would dare say this of God, so they simply marginalize the Scriptures and deny their verbal inspiration.

What those who decry the public confession of Mr. Robertson's beliefs fail to consider is what Mr. Robertson also tried to convey in regard to the rest of that passage from 1 Corinthians that he quoted: ***Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*** What sinners of every stripe must know is that through faith alone in Jesus Christ, the most vile and violent sins are forgiven and gone. Even those ancient homosexuals of Corinth were no longer homosexuals when God declared them righteous through faith!

But where there is no faith in Jesus, there remains the love and defense of sin, especially the kind of sin the sinner loves most.

Advent not only prepares our hearts for the coming of the Son of God to be our Savior from sin, but also His Second Coming when He will judge us all, not by what the social media and the world declares, but by His Word.

God's Word is out there, and you, like Mr. Robertson, are blessed to know it. You are God's Favored Ones, who have been gathered and are preserved by God's almighty and gracious Word of Truth.

I. One of the well-known parts of the Christmas account of Luke 2 is the story of the shepherds: ***And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*** Scripture tells us nothing more about these men and so tradition sets before us its own descriptions. Were they a mix of older and younger men? Was there one "patriarch" among them that served as their moral leader? I often suggest a comparison to our American Cowboy of the 19th century. Probably not very delicate in their manners or way of speaking. With a tough job come rough mannerisms. Who would have imagined that the Lord would make known to these rough and unrefined men the location of the Savior's birth?

Today's media reflect the attitude of human pride arrogance that a real god would not announce the birth of a Savior King to a group of cultural nobodies. And so this most important event in history is marginalized by commercialism and despised by those who are demanding their misapplication of the First Amendment so that people are commanded to take down their nativity scenes, school children are not allowed to sing Christmas carols, and store clerks are forbidden to say "Merry Christmas."

The danger is that we can fall victim to the sinning of the godless. What impresses me about Mr. Duck Dynasty in this present social debate over what he said is that he was able to say what he believed and to back it up with Scripture. Suddenly it is revealed before the eyes of all that this entire debate is between those who believe Scripture to be God's word and those who do not. There is also a third party in this and they are those who don't know what to think because they do not know the Scriptures even though they might call themselves "Christians."

The question before us today is this: Where do I stand on the Scriptures? Are they God's inerrant and infallible Word? If so, then it is this Word that has gathered you into the same camp as the shepherds, and perhaps even the family of Duck Dynasty. This we do know about the shepherds: they knew enough about God's Word of salvation to be able to understand the message of the angel: ***Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*** TODAY: this is the Day appointed by God and spoken of by the prophets in the Old Testament. They knew this day was coming as surely as we know and believe from the Bible that there is a Judgment Day coming soon. TOWN OF DAVID: They knew that was the village right over there! Bethlehem, the place where King David, the ancestor king of God's Kingdom, was also born. They knew this from Scripture. HE IS CHRIST: God's Chosen One, God's Prophet, Priest and King. They knew what this meant because they were knew the prophets, priests and kings of old, just as we now teach our young from Scripture what and who are today's "prophets, priests and kings." HE IS ... THE LORD: This name was used by those who knew God to be the Savior God. This comes only from Scripture, just as we know that from Christmas Day follows Lent, Good Friday and Easter.

God's Word gathers God's Elect from all parts of the world and from every generation. The Gospel is the power of God to all who believe and by that power we are preserved for eternal life.

II. One day during His ministry, Jesus told a parable about a man who planted wheat in his field, but during the night an enemy planted weeds. When this was discovered, the man's farm hands suggested that they should pull up the weeds. However, the man told them: *No, ... because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.* Mt 13 Later, Jesus was asked to explain the parable: *The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.* God knows who are the weeds and who are His wheat.

Who are "God's Wheat?" They are His FAVORED ONES. And how are they identified? On Judgment Day they will be revealed: *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* But that's not until our Lord's Second Advent. I want to know now where I stand with God! Duck Dynasty's Phil Robertson is right when he quotes Scripture: *Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were.* But neither would those Christmas shepherds, the Wise Men, or even Mary and Joseph themselves if God would not have called, gathered them around the Word of God and preserved them by God's Word and Spirit until their dying day. And neither would any of us be saved if God had not called us to faith through the Gospel.

The shepherds found the baby Jesus right where the angel said he would be: in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. Today, we will find Jesus right where God's Word says He is found: in our baptism promise, in the Lord's Supper, and in the Gospel of forgiveness of sins that is proclaimed from our pulpits. By God's Word and Spirit, He keeps us in this faith during these trying times. Do not think that it will be easy for us and our children and grandchildren to remain faithful while being surrounded by those who deny that Jesus is God and King. In fact, Jesus warns that the closer we get to His Second Coming, the more viciously Satan and his angels will wage against us! But as the Apostle Paul and those who believe God's Word can testify, God's promise is this: *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

God, keep us in this saving faith as we live and wait for you to return! Amen.