

“Let the Glorifying and Praising Begin”

Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:8-20

I went to my first Mizzou game this year and I learned a cheer

M-I-Z.... Z-O-U M-I-Z...Z-O-U M-I-Z Z-O-U

I can see you’ve heard of it.

Well the reason I thought of it was the last phrase to tonight’s lesson:

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all they had seen and heard as it had been told them.”

The word for glory “*doxazo*” means to have an opinion, to believe

And secondarily to praise, to value and to honor.

The word for praise “*aineo*” means to praise or to tell.

So as I thought about people with an opinion who weren’t afraid to

Tell other people what they thought or believed,

I thought of the Mizzou fans.

They have opinions and are not afraid to tell people about them.

But what about us as Christians?

Do we have cheers that we can say start and another will finish?

Are we as fanatical about our faith as football fans?

Are we willing to tell people what we believe?

Are we willing to be like the shepherds when we leave this place

And tell people what we have seen and heard,

Glorifying and praising God....I think we are!

We don't have team cheers... but we have team songs.

That's how they do it in English football, what we call soccer.

The cheers are songs.

So if I sing "Joy to the world....THE LORD HAS COME"

When I sing "Hark the herald angels sing...glory to the newborn king."

When I sing "O come all ye faithful....JOYFUL AND TRIUMPHANT."

These are songs that we use to tell people what we believe

as we carol at nursing homes and sing to shut-ins.

They are the cheers of our faith.

We teach them to our children

IT is how we glorify and praise God.

Not only that but we dress up in the costume of our heroes.

This year, in living windows we dressed as Mary and Joseph

The wise men, the shepherds and the angels.

I have gone to countless pageants this year with K plus,

Sunday School and Preschool and our children

wearing the costumes and acting out the story.

St. Francis of Assisi was one of the first to bring the scene alive

In 1223 he had people construct a nativity scene

**outside his church in Italy with Mary and Joseph and shepherds
and it became a tradition, copied and expanded by others.**

**And of course we still do it today and it is also a way
to glorify and praise God and tell the story,
as it had been told to us.**

And we have our banquets as a way to glorify and praise God.

We gather and eat the food of the season as we remember

The stories of the faithful and relive the tragedy and triumphs.

Christ is the host at the table tonight and invites all

Who believe in him to share in this feast.

It is again a way that we glorify and praise God

But joining together in a meal,

breaking bread together.

So friends let the glorifying and praising begin.

Don't let the sports fans out celebrate the Christ fans.

We can be both.... but let us make sure

that we are like those first Shepherds who heard the angels

Who went to see what was happening, and then told people

what we had seen and heard as it had been told them. Amen