

Bible Point ▶

Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.

Bible Verse

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem" (Matthew 2:1a).

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Children will
- worship at worship centers,
 - hear how the shepherds praised God for sending Jesus,
 - help Whiskers remember the true meaning of Christmas, and
 - share wonderful news about Jesus with each other.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

■ The shepherds worship Jesus.

**Luke
2:15-20**



It is significant that Jesus' birth was announced first to shepherds. In those days shepherds were not highly thought of. They were considered so unreliable that their testimony was not accepted in the courts, and they were deemed unclean by the orthodox religious establishment. The fact that Jesus' birth was announced first to them indicates that Jesus came to earth for those in need of a Savior. It also foreshadows the common people's acceptance of Christ and the religious leaders' rejection of him.

The shepherds hurried to find the special baby. Just as the angel had said, they found the baby lying in the manger. As they looked at the tiny child, their hearts were filled with love and praise. Rather than returning quietly to their flocks, the shepherds spread the news that God's promised Savior had arrived. Later, when they went back to their sheep, they continued to praise God for all they had seen and heard.

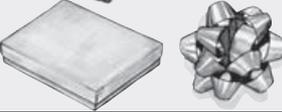
Prayer

- Read Romans 5:8.
- How does knowing that Christ died for you, a sinner, make you feel?
- Pray: Dear Lord, help me praise you, just as the shepherds did. And help me better teach the children in my class about you by...

Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed in the chart on the next page.
- Make photocopies of the "Today I Learned..." handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God's direction in teaching the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Welcome Time	Welcome! —Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.	"Angel Name Tags" (p. 23), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape	
Let's Get Started Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.	Option 1: Sing Praise! —Worship Jesus by singing.	Rhythm instruments, CD player	
	Option 2: Prayerful Praise! —Say prayers of thanks, and hear how the shepherds were thankful for Jesus.	Various household items	
	Option 3: Bible Story Praise! —"Read" <i>Bible Big Books</i> , and retell familiar Bible stories.	Adult Bible, children's Bible, <i>Bible Big Books</i> from previous Learning Labs	
	Pick-Up Time! —Sing a song as they pick up toys and gather for Bible Story Time.	CD player	
Bible Story Time	Setting the Stage! —Make praying hands, and say thank you prayers.	Colored construction paper, scissors, crayons	
	Bible Song and Prayer Time! —Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.	Bible, CD player	
	Hear and Tell the Bible Story! —Hear how the shepherds told others about Jesus, and name people they can tell.	Bible, praying-hands cutouts from Setting the Stage, stapler	
	Do the Bible Story! —Share the news among classmates about Jesus and his birth.	CD player	
Closing 	The Best News! —Help Whiskers remember what Christmas is all about.		
	Special Gift Prayers! —Remind each other that Jesus is God's special gift.	Praying-hands cutouts from Setting the Stage	

*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.

Welcome Time

SUPPLIES: “Angel Name Tags” (p. 23), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape

- Kneel down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about last week’s “Today I Learned...” discussion. Use questions such as “What did you tell your family about the shepherds?” or “Did you have fun teaching your family our finger play about the shepherds? Who did the finger play with you?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we worship him.**
- Hand out the angel name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help children attach the name tags to their clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged or if children weren’t in class that week, have them make new name tags using the photocopiable handout.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.



It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over throughout the lesson will help kids remember it and apply it to their lives.



Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among the children to offer help as needed and direct children’s conversation toward the point of today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “How would you feel if you were with the shepherds who saw baby Jesus?” or “What’s one way you can tell Jesus you love him?”

■ Option 1: Sing Praise!

SUPPLIES: rhythm instruments, CD player



tracks 7, 8

Tell children that ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we worship him. Explain that one way we can worship Jesus is by singing songs to him.

Sing the songs children have learned during this module’s lessons, “Jesus Christ Is Born” (track 8) (to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell”) and “Away in a Manger” (track 7), with the CD. Encourage the children to name other familiar praise songs or Christmas carols they’d like to sing. Bring out blocks or rhythm instruments for children to play as they sing, or let them do hand motions to the music or sway with the rhythm.



Each Let’s Get Started option in this lesson introduces children to a different aspect of worship. If possible, set up all three options. If you don’t have regular adult helpers in your class, ask a teen or parent to assist with the “Prayerful Praise” activity. Introduce children to the “Bible Story Praise” activity, and then move on to the “Sing Praise!” activity while children “read” the Bible stories on their own.





**Jesus Christ is born!
Jesus Christ is born!
Born today in Bethlehem,
Jesus Christ is born!**

**Lying in a manger,
Lying in a manger,
Born today in Bethlehem,
Jesus Christ is born!**

**Glory to God!
Glory to God!
Born today in Bethlehem,
Jesus Christ is born!**



**Away in a manger,
No crib for a bed.
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down his sweet head.**

**The stars in the sky
Looked down where he lay.
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay.**

(Repeat.)

“Away in a Manger” by John Thomas McFarland and James R. Murray

■ Option 2: Prayerful Praise

SUPPLIES: *various household items*

Tell children that after the shepherds found baby Jesus, they thanked God. Explain that we can pray and thank God, too. Set out household items such as fruit, a toy, a bandage, a Bible, gloves, and an umbrella. Hold up the items one at a time, and talk about how each item can remind us to thank God. After discussing the items, take time to pray with the children. If children are shy or don't know how to pray, let them hold the items and say, “Thank you, God, for [name of item].” Or have kids pray out loud with you or repeat after you. Encourage them to thank God for Jesus, God's special gift.

■ Option 3: Bible Story Praise

SUPPLIES: *adult Bible, children's Bible, Bible Big Books from previous Learning Labs*



Set out an adult Bible, one or two children's Bibles, and the *Bible Big Book: Zacchaeus*. If you've used Hands-On Bible Curriculum for preschool in previous quarters, you may also want to set out additional *Bible Big Books*.

Tell children that today they'll be learning that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him. Explain that one way we can worship Jesus is by reading the Bible. Hold up the adult Bible.



Explain to children that even though they can't read the words in an adult Bible yet, they can "read" the children's Bibles and *Bible Big Books* by looking at the pictures and telling the stories in their own words. And remind them that the stories in the *Bible Big Books* come from God's Word, the Bible. Telling the Bible stories now will help them read from the Bible when they get bigger.

When everyone has arrived and you're ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they're doing and get ready to clean up.



You may want to let the children take turns "reading" the *Bible Big Books* to Whiskers.

■ Pick-Up Time

SUPPLIES: CD player



Lead children in singing "Come Along With Me" (track 2) with the CD to the tune of "Come and Go With Me." Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.



**Come along with me and pick up all our things,
Pick up all our things,
Pick up all our things.
Come along with me and pick up all our things
So our room will be clean.**

(Repeat 2x.)

Bible Story Time

■ Setting the Stage

SUPPLIES: colored construction paper, scissors, crayons



Before class, fold sheets of colored construction paper in half. You'll need two for each child. Make sure the *gift box* is empty.

Tell children you'll clap three times to get their attention. Explain that when you clap three times, the children are to stop what they're doing and repeat the clap. Practice this signal a few times. Encourage children to respond quickly so you'll have time for all the fun activities you've planned.

Gather the children around you, and ask:

• **What did you do when you came to our class today?** (Sang songs; prayed; told Bible stories.)

Say: **Some of you practiced singing songs to Jesus. Some of you looked at Bible stories in *Bible Big Books*. Some of you prayed thank you prayers. If you prayed thank you prayers, raise your hands and say, "Thank you, God!"**

Pause for children to say, "Thank you, God!" Then say: **Now let's all say that together. Thank you, God!**


BIBLE POINT

You were all learning important things about our Bible story. Today we're going to hear more about what the shepherds did after they found baby Jesus. We'll learn that ► *Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.* We've already been worshipping Jesus by singing, praying thank you prayers, and reading Bible stories.

Bring out the *gift box* from the Learning Lab. Hold the box up, and say: **Remember our pretty *gift box*? It reminds us that Jesus is God's special gift. In our other lessons we had a glittery angel, hay, and cotton in the box to remind us of different parts of our Bible story. Let's see what's in the box today.**

Ask a child to open the box and hand it to you. Hold it up so children can see that it's empty. Say: **That's funny. Our box is empty today. I guess we need to make something to go inside. Today we're learning that ► *Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.***

Ask: • **What could we make that would help us remember to worship Jesus?** (A Bible; a church; a Christmas tree.)

Say: **There are lots of ways we can worship Jesus. We can worship him by singing, by coming to church, or by showing his love to people around us. The shepherds worshipped Jesus by thanking God that Jesus had come. Let's make praying hands to remind us to pray and thank God for Jesus. We can put the praying hands in our *gift box*.**

Pass out crayons and the folded construction paper. Have each child slip one folded sheet inside the other and then place one hand on the paper, fingers together and little finger on the fold. Trace around each child's hand. Let children color their hands as you go around and cut the hand tracings out, ensuring that the fold stays intact. Cut through all layers of construction paper so each child has two praying-hands cutouts. Put children's names on their cutouts.

When children have finished coloring their hands, clap three times and wait for them to repeat the clap. Say: **Let's put our praying hands in our *gift box* now. We'll each put one praying-hands cutout in the box. I'd like you to keep your other praying hands quietly in your lap so you'll be ready to use it during our Bible story.**

Collect one praying-hands cutout from each child, and lay the cutouts in the *gift box*. As you put them in the box, have children say with you, "Thank you, God, for Jesus."

■ Bible Song and Prayer Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player



tracks 3, 4

Say: **Now it's time to choose a Bible helper to bring me the Bible marked with today's Bible story. As we sing our Bible song, we'll pass around our special Bible. The person who's holding the Bible when the music stops will be our Bible helper today. Remember that each week one of you will get to be the Bible helper.**

Lead children in singing "I'm So Glad for the Bible" (track 3) with the CD to the tune of "Give Me Oil in My Lamp." As you sing, pass around the special Bible.



I'm so glad for the Bible.
 Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'.
 I'm so glad for God's book today.
 I'm so glad for the Bible.
 Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'—
 Keep me learnin' all about his way.

Let me hear 'bout God's love—
 Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'.
 Let me hear 'bout God's love for me.
 Let me hear 'bout God's love—
 Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'.
 Let's shine the light for all to see.

(Repeat first verse.)

When the music stops, invite the child who's holding the Bible to bring it to you. Stamp the child's hand with the *angel stamp*, and thank him or her for bringing you the Bible. Then stamp the other children's hands. Return the *angel stamp* and *ink pad* to the Learning Lab.

Say: **I'm thankful for** [name of child who brought the Bible], **and I'm thankful for everyone in our class today. Let's thank God together for all our friends in this class.**

Lead children in singing "I'm So Glad We're Together" (track 4) with the *CD* to the tune of "Give Me Oil in My Lamp."



I'm so glad we're together.
 Keep us prayin', prayin', prayin'.
 I'm so glad we're all here today.
 I'm so glad we're together.
 Keep us prayin', prayin', prayin'—
 Prayin' for each other every day.

Lead children in folding their hands and bowing their heads as you continue to sing.

Thank you, Lord, for each one.
 Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful.
 Thank you for everyone who's here.
 Thank you, Lord, for each one.
 Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful—
 Thankful for our friends both far and near.

■ Hear and Tell the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: Bible, praying-hands cutouts from *Setting the Stage*, stapler



Bring out the *Learning Mat*, and hang it on a wall in the story area. Fold back the panel with the three wise men. Open your Bible to **Luke 2**, and show the passage to the children. Say: **Our Bible story comes from the book of Luke in the Bible. Our Learning Mat shows us pictures of our Bible story.**

Point to the *Learning Mat* on the wall. Say: **Look at our**

This Bible story is featured in *My First Hands-On Bible*. Order several now for your ministry at group.com.



beautiful Learning Mat! You've all worked so hard to make it special.

Point to the picture of the angel and Mary.

Ask: • **What is the angel telling Mary?** (That Jesus is coming; that she will be Jesus' mother.)

Point to the picture of the manger scene.

Ask: • **What happened here?**

Give children time to talk about Jesus being born in a stable. Then say: **Mary and Joseph walked all the way to Bethlehem. There was no room for them in the inn. Someone let them stay in a stable, and that's where Jesus was born. Our Bible verse tells us in Matthew 2:1 that ► "Jesus was born in Bethlehem."**

Point to the picture of the shepherds and sheep.

Ask: • **Who can tell me about this part of our story?**

Let children tell you how the angel came to the shepherds and told them to look for baby Jesus in a manger.

Say: **Yes, the angel came to the shepherds while they were taking care of their sheep. The angel told the shepherds how to find Jesus. Our story today is about something else the shepherds did.**

After the angels went back to heaven, it was dark and quiet again in the fields. The shepherds left their sheep and ran all the way to Bethlehem to find Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus. Let's pretend we're running with them.

Have children stand up and run in place for a few moments and then sit down. Continue: **They ran down the hillside and into Bethlehem.**

Ask: • **Where did the angel tell them to look for baby Jesus?** (In the stable; in a manger.)

The shepherds looked and looked until they found a baby that was wrapped up in cloth and lying in a manger. Point to the picture of Jesus on the *Learning Mat*. **It was baby Jesus, just as the angels had promised! The shepherds knew right away that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him. After they had seen baby Jesus, they left the stable and went to tell everyone about him. "Jesus is born!" they told people. Turn to someone next to you and tell them, "Jesus is born!"**

Let children tell each other "Jesus is born!" and then continue: **People were surprised and happy to hear the shepherds' news about Jesus. As the shepherds went back to their sheep, they thanked God that Jesus had come.**

Ask: • **How did the shepherds feel when they found Jesus?** (Happy; excited; surprised.)

• **When you get a new present that you're excited about, what are some things you do?** (Say thank you; play with it; tell my friends.)

Say: **Sometimes when we get special gifts or surprises, we want to go tell our friends about them. We also say thank you to the person who gave us the gift or surprise. That's what the shepherds did. They told others about Jesus and thanked God for him. You know, we can tell people about Jesus, just like the shepherds did. We can tell our friends and families that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him at Christmas and all year long.**

You've been holding your praying hands so patiently. I'd like you to think of one person you'd like to tell about Jesus. Maybe you'd like to go home and tell your mom or dad the story we've learned about baby Jesus. Or maybe

BIBLE VERSE ►



BIBLE POINT ►



BIBLE POINT ►

you want to tell a friend at preschool or in your neighborhood. When you've thought of someone, hold up your praying hands.

As children begin to hold up their praying-hands cutouts, invite them to tell you the person they're thinking of. If children can't think of anyone, suggest that they tell their families. When everyone has named a person, say: **Let's put our praying hands on our Learning Mat to help us remember that we can tell people about Jesus, just as the shepherds did.**

Invite children to bring their praying hands to you. Staple the hands around the outside of the *Learning Mat*.



Say: **We can tell people about Jesus, and we can thank God for sending Jesus. Let's fold our hands and do that right now.**

Pray: **Dear God, we know that Jesus is your special gift. Thank you for sending him. Help us worship Jesus all year long. In Jesus' name, amen.**

■ Do the Bible Story



track 10

SUPPLIES: CD player

Say: **Now that we've thought of people we can talk to about Jesus, let's practice doing that right here in our classroom. We're going to play a game that will help us share the news about Jesus and his birth.**



Tell children to stand scattered throughout the room. Say: **I'm going to hand this plush heart to one of you. When I play a song on the CD, walk very slowly and carefully around the room with your eyes closed. When the music stops, stand where you are and listen to my next direction.**

Play "My Heart Rejoices" (track 10) on the CD. Hand the plush heart to one child, and then have children close their eyes and begin moving slowly around the room. After a few seconds, stop the CD and have kids open their eyes.

Say: **If you are holding the plush heart, give it to the person standing closest to you. As you pass the heart, tell that person something wonderful about Jesus.** Start the music again, and have the kids play the game several times or until all the kids have had a chance to pass the heart and tell something wonderful about Jesus.

Ask: • **What are some more wonderful things about Jesus?** (Jesus was born in Bethlehem; Jesus is God's gift; Jesus loves us.)

• **How can you worship Jesus for those wonderful things?** (I can sing to him; I can pray to him; I can tell others about him.)

Say: ► **Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him. When we tell others about the wonderful things that he does, we are spreading his love and we are worshipping him! We also worship Jesus when we sing about him. Let's sing a song about Jesus and see if our friend Whiskers will come out. We can tell him about Jesus, too.**

Sing "My Heart Rejoices" (track 10) with the CD to the tune of "Ten Little Indians," and then bring out Whiskers.



◀ BIBLE POINT



**My heart rejoices,
My heart rejoices,
My heart rejoices,
In God, my Savior.**
(Repeat 2x.)

Closing

■ The Best News

SUPPLIES: none

Bring out Whiskers the Mouse, and go through the following puppet script. When you finish the script, put Whiskers away.



Whiskers: What's that singing I heard? That sounded so pretty. Oh, I'm so excited to see you today!

Teacher: Hello, Whiskers. We're happy to see you, too.

Whiskers: I have the greatest news! I've been waiting all morning to come and tell you! My family opened our Christmas presents, and I got a new blue bike! Just what I've been wanting!

Teacher: Oh, Whiskers, that's special. You must be very happy!

Whiskers: I'm so happy I want to tell everyone I know!

Teacher: Whiskers, you remind me of the shepherds in our Bible story today.

Whiskers: The shepherds? Why?

Teacher: Children, why don't some of you tell Whiskers how the shepherds felt when they found baby Jesus. Tell him what they did after they found him.

(Help the children tell Whiskers how happy the shepherds were to find Jesus and how they hurried to tell everyone about him.)

Whiskers: That is exciting! And they were just like me! They had to tell everyone the news!

Teacher: Yes, Whiskers. The shepherds wanted everyone to know that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.

Whiskers: You know, sometimes at Christmastime, I get so excited about all my presents—it's all I think about. Then I forget that Jesus is God's special gift. That's why we have Christmas. *(To a child)* Do you ever forget that we have Christmas to celebrate Jesus'

birthday? I do, too. *(To another child)* How about you? Do you forget that Jesus is the best present of all?

(Have Whiskers ask several children if they forget about Jesus' birthday at Christmas.)

Whiskers: Hey, I have an idea!

Teacher: What's that?

Whiskers: We should help each other remember! *(To the children)* Do you want to help me, and I'll help you? Oh, goody! Let's all say together, "Jesus is God's special gift."
(Pause.) Oh, boy! That was good. Let's say it again, "Jesus is God's special gift."

Teacher: That was a good idea, Whiskers.

Whiskers: Let's keep reminding each other, OK? I've got to go now. I'm going to Cousin Joey's. I'm going to tell him about my new bike and about Jesus being the best gift of all! Goodbye, everybody!

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■ Special Gift Prayers

SUPPLIES: *praying-hands cutouts from Setting the Stage*



Bring out the *gift box* with the praying-hands cutouts children made earlier. Remove one cutout from the box.

Say: ► **Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.**

Let's pray and thank God for sending Jesus right now. I'm going to pass around our gift box. When it comes to you, take out one praying-hands cutout and give it to me. I'll read the name on the praying hands and say, "Jesus came for [name on hands cutout]." Then we'll all say together,

"Thank you, God, for Jesus." Let's try that together.

Say again, **"Jesus came for [name on hands cutout],"** and then return the hands cutout to its owner. Have children say with you, **"Thank you, God, for Jesus."** Continue passing the box around until you've returned all the hands cutouts.



Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the "Today I Learned..." handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with the children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week's topic.



For Extra Time

If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

■ **Lively Learning: Five Happy Shepherds**

Repeat the following shepherd finger play. After you do the finger play, remind children that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.

Five good shepherds watching their sheep. (Hold up five fingers.)

One saw the angel, and up he leaped. (Put other fingers down, and give a thumbs-up sign.)

"Come," said the angel, "the Savior is here!" (Beckon with other hand.)

Away went the shepherd, without any fear. (Move hand behind back with thumb still up.)

Repeat the rhyme, holding up four, three, two, and then one finger. Finish with this verse:

Five good shepherds standing in a row. (Hold up all five fingers.)

They all found Jesus and bowed down low. (Fold fingers down, making a fist.)

"We love you, Lord Jesus, we love you, we do." (Wiggle fingers excitedly.)

"We'll tell our families and other people, too."

■ **Make to Take: Christmas Lacing Cards**



Before class, punch holes around the edges of small paper plates. Photocopy the "We Worship Jesus" handout (p. 65), and cut out the manger scene. Cut 18- to 20-inch lengths of red or green yarn. You'll need a paper plate, a cutout, and yarn for each child.

Show children how to glue the pictures to their plates and then lace the yarn through the holes in the plates. As children work, review how the shepherds worshipped baby Jesus. Remind them that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him, too. When children have put the yarn through all the holes, help them tie or tape the ends to the back side of the plate. Loop another piece of yarn through the top hole as a hanger.

■ **Treat to Eat: Banana Mangers**



Cut peeled bananas in half and then in half again, as shown here. Give each child a banana quarter and several shredded wheat mini-squares. Let children crumble their shredded wheat to make hay. Put a thin line of honey on each banana. Have children put their shredded wheat hay into their banana mangers and eat. As they enjoy the snack, remind them that the shepherds found baby Jesus in a manger.



■ **Story Picture: The Shepherds Worship Jesus**

Give each child a copy of the "Today I Learned..." handout. Set out glue and small scraps of fabric, and show children how to glue fabric bits onto the shepherds' clothing. Then set out crayons or markers, and let children color the picture. As they work, talk about how the shepherds worshipped Jesus. Remind them that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.

We Worship Jesus

Photocopy the handout, and cut out the pictures.



Today I learned...

Jesus is God's special gift, and we worship him.

Help me learn this:

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem"
(Matthew 2:1a).

Ask me:

- What did the shepherds do after they saw baby Jesus?
- What do you do when you receive a special gift?
- How can our family worship Jesus this Christmas?

Family Fun

- Have fun doing this finger play with your child. Start with one less finger each time. Afterward, talk about people your family could tell about Jesus' birth this Christmas.

Five good shepherds standing in a row. (Hold up all five fingers.)

They all found Jesus and bowed down low. (Fold fingers down, making a fist.)

"We love you, Lord Jesus, we love you, we do!" (Wiggle fingers excitedly.)

"We'll tell our families and other people, too!"

Lesson 4
Today your child learned that **JESUS IS GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT, AND WE WORSHIP HIM.** Children heard how the shepherds worshipped and thanked God for Jesus. They worshipped by singing, praying, and telling others about the good news of Jesus' birth.

The Shepherds Worship Jesus (Luke 2:15-20)

