

## ***The Story and the Glory***

In the 13th C some Christians began a hospital in London, England calling it St Mary of Bethlehem. It was a great benefit to the community. But as the years passed so did the staff & ownership of the hospital. Eventually it was converted into a hospital for the **criminally insane**. Back then those in asylums were chained, tied up or put in straight jackets & often abused. The facility became known for the **shrieks & wailings of patients as their forlorn howls echoed** thru the corridors of this once great hospital of healing. It's reputation turned to one of chaos & mayhem as **cries of the damned reverberated from the dorms of the demented**. Gradually its original name Bethlehem was shortened to Bedlam a word the English language coined describing wild uproar & noisy commotion.

No sooner did the shepherds hail the birth of Jesus & wise men give gifts, than **bedlam** broke out in Bethlehem. Angel said ***'Get out of town, Herod's insane jealousy will bring horror & death to the city'***.

No longer ***'O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie'*** But ***'O little town of bedlam, thy shrieks do reach the sky.'*** As Herod's thugs slaughter 2 yr old boys.

And yet the story of Jesus birth that Xmas day which seemed to go so bad is turned to good. In spite of the evil of man, God is still good. Hope reigns in spite of the horror. It's the story and the glory of Christ birth.

Not much different today. Season filled w/ chaos—Past couple years many have been holding on tight to make it thru. We've dealt w/ **mortgage crises** & record job losses, **market crashes** and financial bailouts. **Stimulus packages** and Cas. We've struggled w/ covid-19, so called global warming and **health care reform**, Justice Dept CIA, FBI under scrutiny for illegal activity.

And on top of it all Xmas which is supposed to be a season of peace & joy but instead brings undue stress & chaos. And yet if we refocus & realize ***God is the same yesterday, today and forever***, tonight He can bring blessings out of what seems like bedlam. Within the Xmas story is the glory of God & gift to you.

You may not get what you want for Xmas... in the material sense but God has an abundance of spiritual blessing that will not only carry you thru the

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season but last throughout the year & into eternity. That is the Xmas story and the glory it brings.

Kids indulge, parents endure—malls, highway, spending, parking. If monthly, spoiled kids, parents die of exhaustion or nervous breakdown.

We miss real reason—for most habit or expected but cost, time, energy, moods—many would skip except for kids sake we keep on.

Simplicity & meaning gone, lost in commercialism (used to **chop** own tree now \$100; **handmade** gifts/malls; buy **one** per family member/dozens) Heart missing.

If get in time machine-back 2000 yrs-scene totally different. Centered one person, baby in manger—God directed--not drinking parties, commercialism and greed.

### **The story and the glory of Xmas**

Jesus birth is unique--mystical beauty surrounding it, unique awe explaining it and lots of controversy acknowledging it. Jesus was no ordinary child. Unless you as a parent had great planning and foresight *'oops I'm pregnant again'*

Jesus birth was planned 4000 yrs before it happened '**seed of woman crush head of serpent**' **Gen 3:15**. Predicted 700 yr prior **Is 7:14** **Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin will be w/ child and bear a son & she will call His name Immanuel**'.

Our idea of conception is husband & wife come together-pediatrician announces. But Jesus conceived of virgin, angel announces.

*Lk 1: Luke 1:30-35 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.*

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Most born in sterile surroundings but Jesus in stable, laid in feeding trough  
*Lk 2:7 And she gave birth to her first born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.*

When our first born, announce great **fanfare**, give out **candy cigars** but Jesus announced by angel to lowly shepherds

*Luke 2:8-14 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields & keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 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." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."*

We born & protected & comforted or **CPS & other agencies involved**. Jesus was hunted down by Herod bent on His destruction

*Mt 2:13,14 an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream saying 'Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy Him.*

So God gave a great gift to humanity at the babies peril, w/ great rejoicing in heaven, w/ kings known as Magi giving gifts to baby Jesus the greatest was worship.

Today we **do less** & give gifts to one another while ignoring worshipping Jesus the King.

Givers are receivers from God. Opened the unopened gift at Xmas—w/ glory it brings.

***Is 61:1 He came to bind up the broken hearted.*** There are hearts this Xmas that are hurting--fallen on hard times--broken marriage, broken health, broken dreams. Suffering all that life throws, to the breaking point. Jesus comes as the answer to the broken hearted. He was broken on the cross so we can

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be made whole. He will bind up your broken life. Lay it at the cross this Xmas.

***Is 61:1 To bring good news to the afflicted'*** The gentle of the earth, underdogs who don't push weight around **vs.** the arrogant who dominate others. Jesus said ***blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.*** Jesus Himself was **meek and gentle** *'when reviled did not revile in return but kept entrusting Himself to the one who judges righteously.* The good news to the afflicted is *'entrust yourselves to the Lord.'* **Salvation is yours.**

***Is 61:1 to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners*** – What **besetting sin** are you dealing w/. What habit or hang up always seems to mess things up for you. Compulsive behavior unseen by others can bring a person into unbelievable bondage. No one hates it more than the person doing it, yet freedom seems so far away. And yet God promises liberty, freedom. ***If the son shall make you free you shall be free indeed. Jn 8:36***

**Houdini British Isles prison**

Harry Houdini, master magician, claimed he could escape from anything. While on British Isles he agreed to be locked in a primitive jail cell boasting of an easy escape from it. His hands placed in steel handcuffs, & he was chained to a bench in the jail cell. The jailer shut the cell door & walked away. Left alone, Houdini quickly freed himself of handcuffs & the chain binding him to the bench. Then he went to work on the cell door, working on the lock but something was wrong. He tried every trick in the book to pick the lock but he couldn't get the lock to spring, to unlock the cell door. After 2 hrs he was dripping w/ sweat, totally discouraged & near exhaustion. In frustration he let out a groan & fell against the cell door & it swung open. To his surprise it had never been locked, **but in his mind it was locked**

***Is 61:2 To comfort all who mourn*** – grief comes in many forms; lost job, medical diagnosis, foreclosure, **wayward child or mate**, financial loss, untimely death. **We need hope and comfort in times like these.** Jesus said ***I will never leave you nor forsake you.***

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The Holy Spirit, paracletos – one who comes along side to help—called the comforter will be w/ you until the end of time. Acknowledge Him right now & draw on comfort He gives

The best of all is Jesus has come to give us et life, **hope of heaven**, secure future w/ God. *Jn 3:15-18 whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved thru Him. He who believes in Him is not judged he who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Many people tonight & tomorrow will celebrate Xmas & not know why. They will gather w/ family & friends, give presents eat a delicious meal, have a day off from work--**all good**. But it's like having an elaborate birthday party w/ presents & food & deserts and neglecting to invite the honored guest, the one whose birthday it is. The story of Xmas is about the glory of God & all the benefits He brings to those who give their hearts to Him & celebrate the true meaning of Xmas..