

When Love Was Born

A woman was shopping at a local flea market when she came upon an antique Christmas manger scene. The price was too good to be true. When she questioned the owner, she verified that it was the correct price. "You can have it for a dollar," she said. "It's all there except Jesus." No wonder the price was so low! A manger is incomplete without the Christ child. That's the centerpiece, the most important part. That's what Christmas is all about. That is all it is supposed to be about! That wondrous story about shepherds living out in the fields, 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 that will cause great joy for all people. Today, in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So, they hurried off and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. This truly is the greatest story ever told!

Christmas began in the heart of God. "Love came down at Christmas," wrote the poet, and it's true God's love came down to us in the manger of Bethlehem. Christmas began in the heart of God. When we reflect on the manger, we see God has come to us in the flesh, the word made flesh. That is why Christmas brings out the best in us. The New Testament teaches us that the very nature of God is love. In the glow of Christmas, we know ourselves to be loved, and we are led to love others.

Christmas is about hope. It is no accident that Christmas comes at the darkest time of the year. We don't know when Jesus was born, so when the date was set for Christmas, it was to symbolize the words of Isaiah that the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. Christmas represents hope. There is no finer symbol of hope than the birth of a child. This baby born in Bethlehem represented humanity's most profound hope. Jesus Deliverer, Savior. Isaiah gave him other names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Christmas comes from the heart of God. Christmas is about hope. Christmas is the best news this world has ever received. An angel had the privilege of first announcing the news to the shepherds. "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." What a powerful message. History was being profoundly shaped as Mary held her newborn son in her arms. Not only the history of the world, but your history and mine. Christmas comes from the heart of God. Christmas is about hope. Christmas is the best news this world could ever receive.

Christmas is the message that our lives are to proclaim! Mark Shultz shares these beautiful words in his Christmas song, "When Love Was Born": "Starlight shines, the night is still, shepherds watch from a hill, I close my eyes, see the night, when love was born. Perfect child gently waits, a mother bends to kiss God's face, I close my eyes, see the night, when love was born. Angels fill the midnight sky, they sing Hallelujah, He is Christ, our King, Emmanuel, Prince of peace. Love comes down for you and me, heaven's gift, the holy spark, to make the way inside our hearts. Bethlehem, through your small door, Came the hope we've waited for, the world was changed forevermore, when love was born. I close my eyes, see the night, when love was born."

I pray you experience the Love of God this Christmas as you reflect on the precious gift of Christ our Lord!