

Advent Devotional (Week 5): Christ



Week Five focuses on the gift of the Christ child, and treasuring our encounters with the living God.

by **Matt Tullos**

SCRIPTURE READING:

"Then she (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped Him snugly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough-because there was no room for them at the inn. In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. This will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a manger.'

"Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors! When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.'

"They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the feeding trough. After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them."

Luke 2:7-19

DEVOTIONAL: EXPECTING AND REMEMBERING

Advent is about expectation and remembrance. We enter into the story of a world in need of a new start. It's as much about the journey as it is the destination. And as we travel on this Christmas journey we remember. We remember Christmases of joy and hardship. We remember people we love who aren't around our table anymore. Some memories are sweet. Others are difficult.

The Italian poet Cesare Pavese wrote, "We do not remember days; we remember moments." Another man at the end of his life said, "I've had my moments, but if I had my life to do over again, I would have more of them."

Can you imagine all the moments Mary had that first Christmas Eve? Luke tells us that she kept all these memories and treasured them in her heart. She saw and experienced things no one had before or will again. She wasn't selected because of her wealth, education, royal lineage or great deeds. In fact, the Bible is silent about the requirements for being the mother of the Messiah. We only know that God favored her highly among women. God's glory consumed her life from the moment Gabriel visited her. God's glory, His radiant love transformed her. She held the Son of God that night of which we sing.

It was a holy night. God's glory came to earth and wrote a love letter to the world in the form of a newborn baby.

APPLICATION: CATCHING A GLIMPSE OF GOD

What happens when you catch a glimpse of God? You treasure it.

Mary could've had bitter memories about the travel arrangements, the lack of planning, the constant need to improvise. But in a barn full of visiting animals, horses, mules, stray dogs, camels, splinters, hay and horse manure, Mary kept all these things treasured in her heart. That night she had to contend with Joseph's snoring and the shepherds, loudly recounting the amazing appearance of angels. They probably woke the baby several times that night. But just before dawn, when everyone except Mary and a mule was still asleep, she gathered a tapestry of memories:

- the beautiful colors of Gabriel's clothes
- the look on Elizabeth's face when she turned and saw Mary
- the busyness of packing for the dreaded tax appointment
- the "No Vacancy" signs
- the nervous, frustrated father
- the tiny hands of the newborn king

I would imagine she wept and smiled. She experienced an orchestra of emotions in concert with the breeze that swept through the Bethlehem hills like a newly released Spirit. We each have opportunities to capture memories of Christ when we follow Him. Knowing that He became our Savior gives us a reason for joy. It's Good News worth celebrating and joy worth finding.

TODAY: CREATE AND CHERISH YOUR MEMORIES

Share: Journal a favorite childhood Christmas memory and share it with a family member or friend.

Encourage: Challenge others to create memories of joy and love this Christmas.

Evaluate: What memories do you wish to make next year. Ask yourself this question: *If I were to live just one more year what would that year be all about?* Plan to live that way in the coming year!

Pray: *Lord, remind me of all the ways you have blessed me. Teach me to number my days and leave a mark of love in the lives of people around me and around the world.*

Express: Challenge family members and friends to give one gift that is created rather than purchased. It might be a craft, a recording, a letter of love or a baked good. Wherever you are on Christmas Eve, read the story of Christ's birth in Luke 2.

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