

WINTER 2018

TIDINGS

CHRIST'S SANCTIFIED HOLY CHURCH



The First Christmas

Do you struggle during the Christmas season? Are you overwhelmed with the demands of the holiday? Do you have high expectations that are never met? Does this time of year make the trials in your life seem that much worse? Take some time to reflect on the first Christmas, and find hope in the presence and promises of God.

The first Christmas looked nothing like the scenes we see in paintings, or the festivities of the season that we celebrate today. The actual birth of Christ was not idyllic. There was no pristine and peaceful setting, with Mary and Joseph beaming at a cherubic Jesus, their heads encircled with halos, the "friendly beasts" lying serenely nearby. Jesus was born in the crudest of settings - a filthy cave. Mary and Joseph, from all appearances, had no assistance at his birth, nor any family support, and they were virtual strangers in town.

What a terrifying and isolating experience that must have been! There was no earthly celebration for the birth of this child, who in the eyes of the world was conceived under questionable circumstances to a young, impoverished family. Life just continued on around them as before - people carrying on their business in the town, being counted for the census, returning to their homes. Time didn't stop. Yet their world, and their plans, changed completely, and they were forced to leave all that is familiar, home and family and nation, and flee to a foreign country in order to save the child's life. What a harsh beginning for the Lord of heaven and earth!

And yet, can you see that God was right there in the middle of the mess? Mary and Joseph were visited by angels, to give them courage and faith at the beginning of this incredible journey. Although there was no acknowledgement of this birth by the government and nation, God did send the unlikeliest of visitors, shepherds and wise men, to reaffirm that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Although no priests rejoiced at his dedication in the temple, two faithful servants of the Lord proclaimed his righteousness there. When the family fled for their lives, God protected and provided for them in a strange land.

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"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

- ISAIAH 60:1-3

UPCOMING

- 2/15 - 2/17: Wilmington, NC
Feastmeeting Services

- 3/2 - 3/3: Hanahan, SC
Feastmeeting Services

- 3/23 - 3/24: Houma, LA
Feastmeeting Services

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him
still,
The dear Christ enters in*

- PHILLIPS BROOKS (1835-1903)

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God was with them through it all, as a comforter, helper, guide, and sustainer in all of the hardship they faced. Externally, things looked very difficult, and their lives were forever changed, but God blessed them in the midst of every trial. It is clear that, from the very beginning, Christ identified with the struggles of the people he was sent to save. Therefore, we can take great comfort and courage from Jesus' own experience, knowing that God is with us as well. God did not promise an easy life, but in Christ, we can have a victorious one. Perhaps you are in the middle of your own mess, and do not eagerly anticipate this Christmas season. The holiday festivities don't hide the fact that life is hard. May I invite you to look upon the Christmas story with fresh eyes and see that Jesus understands your suffering. He experienced it too! Jesus is also with you in your suffering, helping all who believe in Him to look beyond this momentary light affliction to a far more eternal and exceeding weight of glory which is at work in their lives (2 Corinthians 4. 17). God is with us, God is for us, God is in us!

- Sis. Candy Barnes

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

Taken from "The Comforter,
December 1960.

HIS STAR

It was a bright star. It was an entirely new star. Nothing like it was known before and nothing like it has been known since. It was "His" star.

The wise men who first saw this bright and new star said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him." No one could tell them, only the star; and it led them "till it came and stood over where the young child was." The star belonged to Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem.

In the Book of Revelation we read of how John saw a vision of Jesus, no longer as a Babe in a manger, but a King on a throne. And Jesus said to John, "I, Jesus...am the bright and morning star."

Then the Apostle Peter in his second letter tells us that the stories in the Bible are like "a light that shineth in a dark place" to bring us to the glad dawn of that day in which "The day star shall arise in your heart." The Babe of Bethlehem who is the King of Heaven will come to shine like a star in our hearts--if we ask Him.

Jesus came as a Babe born in a manger; He died on a cross for the sins of the world; God raised Him from the dead to be the living Saviour. By faith, therefore, it is the privilege of each individual to be in touch with this wonderful Man who alone has the power to forgive sins and grant the free gift of everlasting life...through sanctification of the spirit.

FEAR


I am a person often tempted to fear. I say tempted because I do not believe that this fear (other than an honorable fear and reverence towards our Almighty God) comes from my Savior, but from the father of lies, Satan. Whether it be about what happens tomorrow, what's happening today, or the effects of what happened yesterday, the devil delights in us succumbing to fear. So what does the Scripture show us about dealing with this?

One example that has challenged me is found in the fourth chapter of Exodus. Moses, who we revere today as a brave soldier for the Lord, feels inadequate to do what God has called him to do. He fears that he lacks eloquence and the ability to speak to the Israelites in their time of need. How many times in our lives do we fear the future because we feel inadequate to face it? How many times do we look at a problem and say, "I can't handle this," or, "How am I going to overcome this?"

Ultimately, we fear because we are putting our ability to succeed in ourselves. A sister said at a recent revival meeting that if we compare our mountains to ourselves, they will always seem insurmountable. But if we compare them to God, we will be able to face them as infinitesimal, the way God intended it to be. When I'm faced with fear and hesitation, am I considering that my "Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth, not neither is weary?" (Isaiah 40:29) Christ's perfect love casts out every fear. Lord, help us to remember that You abolished fear when You rose from the grave, and that Your never-ending strength is now placed in us through the Holy Spirit.

- Sis. Jessie Collier

STORMS



"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

—Mark 4: 35-41

We have been through storms. Most recently Florence and Michael made their presence known throughout the Southeast, but during my lifetime alone I can name so many others. I was working in Gwinnett County when Hurricane Katrina destroyed so much of New Orleans, displacing thousands. One woman in particular taught me about weathering a storm. She was, when I knew her, thirty-two weeks pregnant and had been standing in filthy water for three days awaiting rescue. She had open wounds on her feet. She had lost family members and everything she owned.

The enemy of our soul would have us feel confusion, failure, or weakness. He would have us compare ourselves to all the pretty online profiles and feel inadequate. He is out to "kill, to steal, and to destroy" (St. John 10:10) and would want us to doubt our identity as God sees us. He would have us be distracted by the whims of the world and what others think.

At the time my own life was hectic. My husband and I were working full time, and I was doing twenty-four hour call shifts, all while raising two kids. Lexy wasn't yet two. We were busy. Just like a man walking through a rainstorm with his collar turned up and eyes down, I was focused only on my own trials. I was self-absorbed, as we all can be. Then, I met that woman. She was tired, grieving, ill, and so desperately grateful to be safe and to have a healthy fetus. Stripped of her possessions and her day to day concerns, she was purely, deeply grateful for everything she still had. My perspective changed completely, as did my attitude.

When we are focused only on our own circumstance it is so easy to become anxious, fearful, and suffer a crisis of faith. As the storm rolls in it darkens our skies, deafens us

with winds, and rattles our walls. Storms are scary and so easily we become consumed with that fear, losing our perspective.

During Michael, we watched on satellite as the enormous storm moved toward us. We watched as it moved over Albany and just sat there dumping water over the land and people we love. Being able to see above the storm like that, to track it, was eerie. I wasn't sure if I was relieved or more afraid.

Just like the satellite, God isn't beneath those clouds but far above them. His view is so wide that He sees at once all places and all time. He knows what has happened, is happening, and will happen. He knew the men on that boat, where Jesus slept, were afraid. He knows when we are afraid too. He may not choose to stop the winds of life's storms or still our rough waters, but He will lift our chins and show us the end of the storm on the horizon. He shows us the breaking light as the storm clouds pass and reminds us that others also stand in the storm.

"A storm drags its robes over the valley while a wash of sunlight blesses an assemblage of cottages and yet another cloud bank shades a field in need of relief from the summer sun. I see before us the very truth of existence. Life is at all times and all at once a magnificent and terrible pageantry. This is how God sees the world and why He is not overwhelmed, as we small humans are, by the darkness for He can see those enjoying the light at the very moment others are the deepest despair and He knows how swiftly the weather moves across the land."

(The House of Hawthorne by Erika Robuck)

— Sis. Jennifer Smith

PARTING THOUGHT:

**Earth in shadow, restlessly hold
Labour's waiting, in silent hope
For the promise, it longs to know
What Heaven holds
Then the angels, in holy haste
Lift their anthem, Your Saviour lays
In a manger, in humble form
Your King is born**

**Hail! the Prince of Heaven comes!
Angel choirs sound the call
For this babe wrapped in a cloth is
The incarnate word of God
All the kingdom and its power
Resting now in this child
Prince of Heaven
Jesus, hope of the world**

**We can know Him, this prince of peace
In light of mercy, confess our sin
Lay our burdens at Jesus' feet
And with gladness sing
King of glory, we gladly greet
Born in wonder and majesty
Forever worthy, the earth will sing
Oh, prince of heaven, we worship Thee**

"Prince of Heaven" Scott Ligertwood /
Brooke Fraser

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GALATIANS 4:4-5
BUT WHEN THE FULNESS OF THE TIME WAS
COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, MADE OF A
WOMAN, MADE UNDER THE LAW, TO REDEEM
THEM THAT WERE UNDER THE LAW, THAT WE
MIGHT RECEIVE THE ADOPTION OF SONS.

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