



The Christmas Story Is All Around Us

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Ancient scriptures relay the details of the birth of the baby Jesus. It seems so strange to think about how more than two thousand later we still talk about the humble beginnings that led to continued celebrations on December 25 of each year.

Though things have changed over time, many things remain the same.

We are all still required to pay taxes. The internet and mail system alleviate the need for us to travel in order to do that, however the government still very much informs us of when to pay and how much we owe. Joseph and Mary were required to travel to their home area to pay their taxes and were obedient in doing this despite the fact that she was heavily pregnant and that their only form of transportation was a donkey.

Our society assists weary travelers who either didn't plan well or perhaps didn't have the means to find accommodation. Homeless shelters and kind citizens offer temporary beds for those who face troubles or "no vacancy" signs. For Joseph and Mary, the kind innkeeper had compassion when he saw their need. His stable gave them a place to rest and be protected for the night.

Giving birth and caring for a newborn are still very demanding tasks that involve pain and sacrifice. Mary didn't have a sterile maternity ward or obstetrician. She brought Jesus into the world in the same way that we have all arrived over the centuries. In contemporary society we promote the idea of having an active labour and delivery coach. Joseph served in this role to help Mary with the birth.

Most people enjoy being around babies - even if they don't know the parents or family members. Sometimes even the sight of a baby motivates a stranger to draw close and mix smiles with conversation. It is a common practice in modern society to have elaborate baby showers and viewings where designer clothing and expensive gifts are given for the infant. Joseph and Mary's baby attracted the attention of strangers - shepherds and wise men. The gifts that they brought, however, were not practical ones that could be used by or for a newborn child. I'm not sure about what happened to the gold, frankincense and myrrh that they brought for the new family. The Bible doesn't tell us if they were sold to support the child, saved for him to use when he was older or used in another manner.

We all know that one person can bring change to the world. Think of Gandhi, or Thomas Edison, Bill Gates or Oprah. Each of them used their talents and courage in a unique way.

Jesus changed the world by being an example and teaching us how to live with faith and hope. The Christmas story reminds us of the things that we also can do to improve the world. We can welcome the travelers who comes from other countries without understanding our language or customs. We can provide accommodation for those who face circumstances that create need. We can support new families with our encouragement and gifts. And we can offer hope to replace the discouragement, sadness, fear and insecurity that people often face.

Christmas is more than being a time to celebrate with family and friends. It is also an opportunity to think about all the details that surrounded the birth of the child and how we can use them to bring peace and love and joy into the lives of others.

Merry Christmas everyone!