

COME THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING

Personal Testimonies Of Jesus Christ

A Christmas Proclamation

The Messiah has come -- a testimony that echoes across centuries and generations. The words of those who witnessed the event give truth to the Christmas Story that we read every year. We celebrate their proclamation that the prophecies of old were at last fulfilled.

Their voices tell us of the remarkable things that happened. Just and holy men saw angels, devout women were given special knowledge, a decree demanded a young family travel to an obscure but prophetic village called Bethlehem, shepherds heard a heavenly choir, and wise men saw a new star

All these voices are testimonies of one thing – The King of Israel is born!

Glory to the Newborn King

The first recorded witness in the Christmas Story actually begins not in Bethlehem, or Nazareth, but in the Hill Country of Judea where the noble priest Zachariah carried out the routine procedure of burning incense in the temple. But nothing about it would be routine that day for standing next to the alter was an Angel of the Lord who told Zachariah something so astonishing the old priest found it hard to believe.

In time the Angel's words were fulfilled. Zachariah's wife, Elisabeth – barren for so many years – had a son. When the baby was blessed Zachariah knew it was a sign. This child, his son was the one chosen to prepare the way for the light that was to come...

Arise, and Shine Your Light Has Come

Although people do not always recall, there is another Mother in the Christmas story who testifies to us. When Elisabeth was six months pregnant, pregnant with the child she once thought she would never have, her cousin Mary came to visit her.

When Mary walked into the home of her cousin, perhaps wondering how she would ever find the words to explain what happened to her, she called out to Elisabeth.

And when Elisabeth heard Mary call her name, the child she carried leaped, leaped within her womb and Elisabeth knew before her sweet cousin could even utter a word what had happened and spoke what must have been words of infinite comfort to Mary:

“Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Whence is this that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

Candlelight Carol

And Mary answered Elisabeth and said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath filled the hungry with good things. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.

Is there any one who understood better who her child was than Mary herself? Is there any mortal who sacrificed more so that mankind could be saved?

One December Bright and Clear

We have no account of words spoken by Joseph, but actions speak louder than words, and Joseph's actions certainly bear testimony of his belief in the divinity of Mary's child. He took Mary to wife and protected her and the precious child she carried.

His quiet, determined conviction and understanding of his role in the Christmas Story serves as a silent witness to his belief that this child was indeed the Son of God.

Silent Night

His announcement would change the world. His declaration would travel far beyond the small hillside where he assured trembling shepherds there was nothing to fear. His words of good news would be repeated, written, quoted, sung, by billions.

What words could possibly have such an affect? These words: "Unto you is born this day a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Just as he called to those shepherds, he calls to us. Fear not! Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels' sing. Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord the newborn king.

Angels We Have Heard On High

The most beloved and perhaps most powerful testimony of all comes not from priests, or prophets, or kings, but simple shepherds on a hillside, watching their flocks in the still of a starry night. Not a single person alone, but several people at one time in one place saw and heard something so astounding they literally shook with fear.

They witnessed that an angel shining in magnificent glory appeared to them and told them the remarkable news that a Savior, Christ the Lord had been born, that he was nearby in Bethlehem. Then the sky was suddenly filled with more angels -- countless angels, a heavenly host, praising God, saying "Peace on earth, good will toward men."

Their response was to immediately, with haste, go to Bethlehem.

Rise Up Shepherd and Follow

There in Bethlehem they found everything just as the angel told them it would be. A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in, of all things, a manger.

As preposterous and implausible as it all must have sounded they testified of it – making known abroad the news people had been awaiting for centuries. How could these humble shepherds make such an audacious claim? Yet they did. They told everyone and anyone near and far what they had seen and heard – that Christ the Lord was born. Angels had appeared to them and told them so. That they had seen with their own eyes Jesus Christ, the Son of God in that manger in that stable in the city of Bethlehem.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things, which were told them by the shepherds...

We're Goin Up to Bethlehem

We know so little about the Wise Men. We don't know how many of them there really were, or even their names. But we do know they came from the East, and that they were most likely from a priestly tribe known as the Magi. The Magi were familiar with Jewish prophecy since the days of Daniel during the Babylonian exile. They were influential counselors (hence the name wise men), mathematicians, and astrologists. Among other duties it was their calling to select and anoint new kings earning them the title, King Makers. We know they were wealthy because of their gifts, powerful because Herod admitted them into his court, and respected because he took them at their word.

They traveled a considerable and treacherous distance because they had seen a star, a new star in the heavens. They followed that star until it brought them to the home of a poor and insignificant family with a son who had been born in a stable and laid in a manger. And when they saw the young child these King Makers from the east bowed down and worshiped him and gave him gifts of gold and the anointing oils of frankincense and myrrh.

We know so little about the Wise Men, but we know their testimony – and that is enough.

Rob Jenkins Solo

God's kingdom will never go unopposed, and so there is in this story a reluctant witness. King Herod, a man with no mercy for anyone he perceived as a threat to his power. Friends, family, wife, his own children all fell victim to his ruthless expediency.

When unwitting Wise Men from the east came to him while searching for the King of the Jews, Herod was disturbed. He knew the prophecies and feared above all, their fulfillment.

He could have let it go, ignored the rumors, sent the Wise Men on their way with no demand for further information. His failure to do so testifies he sincerely believed the rumors of angels and stars were more than just stories. He knew the King of the Jews had been born and he responded with swift and terrible action.

Herod's story is a dark shadow in the Christmas tale. It is not unlike the world we now live in. It has ever been so that humans have proven fallible. But in this darkness there is a great light that answers our cry of distress and anguish. That comes to us in the night of our soul and offers mercy and shields us from the darkness of the world. We are saved because, in spite of Herod's best efforts, the Divine Redeemer lives.

And although God's kingdom will never go unopposed, it will never be defeated.

Oh, Divine Redeemer

Although baby Jesus was laid in a manger of hay because there was no room for them in the inn, the Gospel accounts do not mention any animals at the scene of Jesus' birth. But still there are legends that tell of miraculous signs given by animals that were surely there and witnessed the event.

Some legends tell us the animals spoke crying "Christ is born!" Others have birds helping the new mother by stoking the fire with their wings, or plucking their own feathers to make a soft downy bed for the baby, or singing with the angels. Other legends claim that bees sang psalms and hymns in glorious harmonies to commemorate the Nativity.

Some still believe to this day that if you could enter a stable at the stroke of midnight on Christmas Eve, you would see the Oxen and other animals kneel to honor the moment of Jesus' birth.

Perhaps they are only legends, but we can imagine what these silent witnesses saw and thought and perhaps felt as they gazed at the newborn baby in a manger.

Away in the Manger

40 days after the miraculous birth, Mary and Joseph took the baby to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord and offer sacrifices, as was custom. There at the temple we find the last two witnesses of the Christmas Story, a prophet and prophetess who bear testimony that the Messiah was born.

Simeon, was a just and devout man living in the city of Jerusalem. Like those around him, he had been waiting for the consolation of Israel all of his very long life. But he had been given a special promise – that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord Christ.

Prompted by the spirit to go to the temple, he saw the child there with Mary and Joseph. Emboldened with joy, he took the baby up in his arms, blessed God and said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou has prepared before the face of all people: A light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.

Anna, a widow for longer than most people have been alive, never left the temple, but served God constantly with fasting and prayer. When she saw the Christ child she knew in that moment her prayers, and the prayers of all Israel had been answered. She gave thanks to the Lord and bore testimony to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem that this baby, the son of Mary, was the hope of Israel.

These two powerful aged witnesses knew the moment they saw the Christ Child who he was. They testified of him then. They testify still today.

Medley

All of these testimonies weave the Christmas Story that we’ve come to love over the years.

And yet there is still one very important testimony, and that is yours.

Old, young, poor, wealthy, male, female, great, small, powerful and humble, all witness that something extraordinary happened that night. Do you believe them? Do you believe the Son of God was born that night? And if you do, who will you share your own testimony of the Christmas story with this season?

What Can I Give Him

We have one last testimony to share with you this evening – ours.

We believe that little baby, born of Mary, guarded by Joseph, visited by shepherds, and honored by Wise Men, is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Savior of the World.

We believe that he redeems us -- that through his power, mercy and grace we can be saved. He is the fount of every blessing and we are ever grateful that he has tuned our hearts and voices to sing his praise -- especially in this season when we celebrate all these testimonies of his birth.

The path that leads to him is not always easy, but in a world where we have the tendency to wander, Christmas once again seals our heart to him. Because if you ever doubt, just remember the Christmas Story. Remember the testimonies of those calling out to you, testifying through the ages...He was born and he lives for each of us!

May these testimonies inspire you to give your heart to him this Christmas, and every day of the year.

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

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