



Little Baby In The Manger

Becky Combee

For many years, the Combee family gathered at the old homeplace for their Christmas celebration. After a wonderful dinner, we all gathered in the living room elbow-to-elbow to hear Wayne's dad read from Luke chapter 2. It was a tradition we cherished. After Pop-Pop's departure to heaven, someone else read the scripture, but the tradition continued!

Years later, we were gathered together at a park when one of the youngest of this vast family stood and quoted the Word from Luke 2. Standing on a bench with her grandfather holding her steady, she enunciated every word. What a surprise! It was a precious moment!

It is so important at this time of the year to remember that Jesus is the foundation of our celebration. I am sure you have heard the quote, "Jesus is the reason for the season." This quote summarizes the heart of every dedicated Christian. Jesus must be the center of our celebration.

The apostle John writes that Jesus was the Word made flesh.¹ Dr. Luke in his gospel stated the reason he was made flesh. He came to visit and redeem God's people.² The word "visit" used by Luke means to help, to benefit, to care for. This reminds me of my grandmother who was very petite and frequently needed assistance. Family members often visited her to help her accomplish some particular task.

Of course, the motive for our dedication to

The Gift of Himself

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He gave up all He was, but not who He was. The infant that lay in Mary and Joseph's arms was Christ, the Son of God. But what He remembered, what He knew, remained in heaven. For just as a baby knows only his mother's voice, his father's tones, Jesus, the son of his parents, the Son of His Father in heaven, lost all He thought, all He'd done, every single memory. He willingly gave them up. Luke 2:52 says, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." He had to grow up, in other words. Learn to walk, learn to talk, learn objects and textures and sounds. He knew not a donkey, palm branches, nor people's praises, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" He saw only the light, the smile of His family's faces, and the playthings in His room. Though Rome ruled Israel, though men were condemned to die, though crosses stood tall outside of Jerusalem, Jesus the toddler, Jesus the preteen, was as human as you and me.

For a time, He saw only Egypt. His father gave up his business, his culture, to protect his infant son. Relocating there for safety, he worshipped and, I'm sure, wondered at this future he hadn't foreseen. Jesus knew only He'd been raised there, then in Nazareth, that they'd moved. Or maybe not either one. What can a two-year-old know? Wise men? Herod? When He was twelve, we find Him in the temple quizzing the religious scholars who were amazed by His knowledge. Jesus' words leap

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Great-Granny was love. Does that sound familiar? GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. God sent His Son to rescue mankind from sin because of His SO LOVE.

The word SO is very important. In just two letters, we express the grandeur, the greatness, and sometimes the trauma of our heart and mind. Listen to these expressions. They are very familiar. How about - that made me SO mad. I was SO aggravated. That job was SO difficult. Or, we could speak graciously saying that house was SO beautiful. The event was SO lovely. It was SO enjoyable. SO, SO, SO IMPORTANT!

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD that He surrendered His Only Begotten Son to REDEEM mankind. Through God's great plan of redemption,

Jesus would die to pay for man's sin. Then in three days, Jesus would be RESURRECTED, and man's sins would be REMITTED or blotted out.

Now, all who believe and confess Jesus as Lord are the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. We are fully acceptable to God and no longer in Satan's kingdom. We are in the Kingdom of God as His beloved sons and daughters.

This is why Jesus the Word was made flesh. This is why we celebrate Christmas. We are not in the darkness of Satan's Kingdom! We are new creatures walking in God's light.

Little Baby in the manger, thank you for coming! Thank you God our Father and Jesus our Lord! Thank you for this season of great joy!

Merry Christmas, Becky

¹John 1:14 ²Luke 1:68 ³Luke 2:49 ⁴1 Peter 1:20

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out at us. There stand His parents, relieved to have found Him, and curiously, He replies, "Didn't you know I'd be about my Father's business?"³ Somewhere between Bethlehem and that moment, He'd come to know His heritage and the plan of God set out from before the dawn of time.

The depth of this truth startles me. We've overlooked Jesus' youth, and we've not seen the order of His birth in time as God saw it. It is not that God sent Him to us to be born amidst the clutter of peoples, but that Jesus Himself prophesied His birth as being the center of all life.⁴ For we revolve around Him and not the other way around. Before the foundation of the world, when only God knew what would happen, God set in motion the salvation of all people, through the gift of Himself, and He dedicated Himself to the fullest extent of it. Whatever it would take of Him, be that the letting go of memories, letting go of dignity, letting go of His power and glory, and ultimately, surrendering His life, He would do it and it would not fail.

Glory to God in the highest, our majestic, beautiful King. Peace be on your earth and goodwill to all men.

Peace is my bequest to you, and the peace which I will give you is mine to give; I do not give *peace* as the world gives it. Do not let your heart be distressed, or play the coward. (Jn 14:27 Knox)

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good will toward men. (Luke 2:13-14)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this, you will experience God's *peace*, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His *peace* will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 TLB)