

## He Didn't Stay in a Barn

Wisemen. Shepherds. Angels. All part of the story. You probably remember the passages by heart, it's like the Pledge of Allegiance you've recited a thousand times:

"A Savior has been born to you: he is Christ the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

"He will be called Jesus for he will save his people from their sins."

"They presented their gifts, of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Special memories. Special stories. Stories that "Mary cherished in her heart."<sup>2</sup>

But, I believe one memory caused her to pause. The old prophet Simeon proclaimed as he held Jesus in his arms: "My eyes have seen your salvation ... a light ... to the Gentiles ... and ... glory to your people Israel."<sup>3</sup> As then, a tear entered his eye as he handed the child back to Mary and looked at her: "And a sword will pierce your own soul, too."<sup>4</sup>

What did the prophet mean?

Mary didn't know.

She didn't want to.

Mary didn't know *how* Jesus "would save his people from their sins." We do.

He didn't stay in a manger.

The free gift of God's salvation would come at a dreadful price. The life of God's son. Freely given. A gift of love. To an undeserving, wretched world.

We come to the part of our service where we put away the manger and remember the cross. Put away the angels; remember the soldiers. The cries of anguish as the spikes are driven into his wrists. The cry: "Father forgive them."

Put away the shepherds. Remember the crowds. Jeering. Put away the Wise Men. Remember the Pharisees. Judas. The betrayal.

---

<sup>1</sup>Luke 2:11.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:19.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:30, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:35.

Your betrayal. Your denials. Your sin.

Jesus saved us by carrying our sins up a hill. The cross he bore was not of wood but of sin and failure and hypocrisy.

They were all nailed to that tree. To be taken to the depths of hell. On the cross, God seized our sin and threw it as far as the east is from the west.

Jesus saved us at Calvary. But he didn't just save us *from* our sin. He saved us to live new lives. Lives as over comers. Living sacrifices.

Willing, living presents to God. Serving. Doing good works. Proclaiming the Good News. Loving. Caring. Giving. Transforming the world with the light of His love.

Love like the love he demonstrated while pinned to the Cross. That's the last place we see him talking to Mary. Even from his place of torment, He thought of her. Presenting her to John, he said, "Dear woman, here is your son." Then to John, "Here is your mother."<sup>5</sup> Jesus took care of His own.

Even from His agony, He wanted to make sure His mother was provided for. Both physically and emotionally. He felt John was up for the job.

He feels that you are up for the job, too. Of taking care of his people. Of providing the emotional and financial support that others need. Of forgiving. Of loving.

In this season of Christmas, let's remember: Jesus didn't stay in a barn. And he didn't stay in the grave. He stays in our heart.

He grew to be a man who would save the world. Save it at Calvary. Save it by teaching us how to worship God in spirit and truth, not from rote and ritual.

*Christmas it's a child in a manger,  
It's God's gift and plan,  
That Salvation's freely offered,  
as a gift to every man!*

*And no matter how many times I hear it,  
a tear fills my eye,  
For the greatest gift I ever got,  
was a baby born to die!  
Yeah, the greatest gift I ever got,  
was a baby born to die!*

*(Excerpt from, "The Greatest Gift I Ever Got", DLD, 1999.)*

---

<sup>5</sup> John 19:26-27.