

Do not ever lose the sense of wonder over this glorious in this Christmas story. It's not ever the same old story. Scripture want you to see how this birth pointed you to something else. How this birth is connected to why He comes.

From the wood of the manger to the wood of the cross. **Wrapped in swaddling cloths**, same words, appear next as they take His body from the cross and wrapped in swaddling clothes. The angels sang **Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth**, as He rides into Jerusalem Palm Sunday to die they sing **peace in heaven and Glory to God in the highest**. No room at the Inn; the word for Inn, actually the same as Upper room, which appears next before His death; as one day He will be in the Inn/Upper room to institute His Sacrament of His body and blood which Scripture says proclaims His death until He comes again.

No coincidence He's in a manger/feeding trough, in a city that means House of bread, as He will say **I am the bread of heaven come down, my flesh is true food, whoever eats my flesh has eternal life**. At Jesus conception, Mary **believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her** and you will here that word fulfilled again at the cross when Jesus says, **It is fulfilled. Finished**. The child given burial spice myrrh as gift, that word appears again in the hands of the women at the tomb Easter morn. He's given gold for a King and no truer statement in all the world is found, than the mocking charge over His head at the cross, **This is the King of the Jews**.

See the manger in the shadow of the cross. Actually this place is a Bethlehem, that altar -a manger as heaven and earth are joined together here as in no other way on earth. Humbly manged for you, His very body, blood born of Mary, here to bring forgiveness, new life, and you, never the same again. There's no other God than the one who nurses from His mother, who comes to you, not in feelings and experience, or mystical ways, but in you, with you, joined to you -there, here. This holy place.

His birth, true God is also true man. Christmas. Nothing is ever the same again. 200 years ago this very night. St. Nickolas church in Austria, a congregation first sang a Christmas carol, that they heard that same place, performed the year before. 200 years ago, first time a congregation sang Silent Night. And Christmas services never the same again, singing:

Silent Night. Holy Night. All creation in silent awe, beyond words; the night lights up with His glory. God comes in our flesh, to silence your fears and despair, to silence all the voices in your head, all the sinful thoughts, all the pride, selfish thinking. Silent.

All is calm. In this nativity, Zechariah, John's father, told, **do not be afraid**, Mary told, **do not be afraid**, Joseph told, **do not fear**, the shepherds told, **fear not**, and more that any other phrase in Scripture, you too sent a messenger to tell you: **do not fear**. This child has come to calm you. You have many fears. Christmas, life, never the same again for Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, even you. He has come to

harm you. All is calm. In this life, so much to uncalm you; He is here to silence your fears. He will take care of you, nothing to be afraid. All is calm, not by your works, not by your meditations, but from this babe's works in you, His works for you. And a calm to draw you away from all your distractions, entertainments; put your phone away, draws you to be calm, spend time in His Word.

All is bright. One gloomy, silent night, God stepped into our darkness. A Light shines in the darkness of your sin and death. Enlightened by the Word, you see clearly now. Your sins, your failures are on display. You are exposed by the Light. Even those things you dare not speak, hope know one finds out. The Light of the world is here to overwhelm the dark places of your heart, with forgiveness beyond all measure.

And thus you can **Sleep in heavenly peace.** Rest. Heavenly Peace. Peace on earth which the angels sang. In Jesus, God and sinners reconciled. Your warfare is ended in this Child, wrath satisfied at His cross; those who live repentant, He comes to forgive, that is, give peace. Rest in heavenly peace. What we all yearn for.

Some of you, filled with joy, this is as good as it gets and things may even be better in coming years. Others of you, there's some sadness and weight behind the smiles, and this season is marked with struggles, with brokenness. Still there are others, barely holding it together amid the beautiful attire. You deeply hurt, just want to cry.

And this child comes for all of you. All of you desperately, more than anything else in your life, you need more this child brings, that you would bask in His forgiveness and life, bask in His peace and gifts. Your heavenly peace -not a feeling or an experience but a person, in whom you are never the same again. Don't let anyone, or anything rob you from the joy and peace this Child gives you.

Our Christmas celebrations, never the same again. Great joys, so many blessings. You can look around the gathering-ever changing, year by year. And a time comes for each of you that you no longer go to grandmas for Christmas. As you gather around table or a tree, you can still picture dear loved ones, who use to be there, even hear their voices, never the same again.

You may continue with a broken heart, you may be left in the chaos of your life and family, but He will never leave you without His heavenly peace. He will take care of you. He makes all things new. You have not lost anything that this child will not restore to you... And Christmas will never be the same again, when you celebrate it with your family in paradise.

Do not fear. You are never alone. He is born for the unworthy, for the dregs, for the failures, for the weak, for the sick, for the broken, the poor in spirit, for the diseased, which is to say, He comes for you. Living repentant, baptismal daily rising to new life in Him, not far from His Word, Sacraments, you are never the same again.

Do not lose the sense of wonder of Christmas, God in the flesh, joined to you. You are the reason He's born. His desire to do all things that He could spend every Christmas for eternity with you and you with those you love. Be Silent. He makes you Holy. All is calm. Rest in heavenly peace. Christmas. never the same again. And