



DECEMBER 24, 2016



It's Christmas week again, & all kinds of sounds remind us of that bells ringing, choirs singing, & music filling the air. But in the midst of all the joyous sounds of our "jolly, holly holiday" there are other sounds around us that are often unheard of.

Let's go back a little over 2,000 years ago to that very first Christmas in Bethlehem, & hear some sounds there, too sounds of a busy inn, of animals feeding in a stable, of angels singing on high, of excited shepherds coming to see the baby in the manger, & I'm sure, Mary's voice in a soft lullaby.

But some time later those sounds were replaced by the shouts of soldiers, the cries of children, & the wailing of anguished mothers.

To understand what I am talking about, please realize that several weeks or even a few months had passed by since the birth of Jesus. Joseph & Mary & Jesus were no longer in the stable. Now they were living in some small house in Bethlehem. And it was during this time that the Magi, the Wise Men as we call them, came to worship Him.

What happened after the Magi left Bethlehem to return to their own homeland.

"When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child & His mother & escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill Him.'

"So he got up, took the child & His mother during the night & left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.

Three Things God Wants To Communicate To Us This Season

There is suffering and God came to bear it with us.

The Bible is always honest. So when it tells the story of Christmas, it not only tells about angels & shepherds & wise men who come with gifts of gold & frankincense & myrrh, but it also tells about King Herod, about soldiers, & about the murder of little children.

It would be virtually impossible for us to imagine what it was like to be a parent in Bethlehem at that time. To have a little boy, maybe 18 months old, who has captured your heart, & the sparkle in his eyes brightens up your day.

Anguish is still part of the Christmas scene even today. There are many who are suffering, many who are lonely, & many who are grieving. And for that reason they find little joy in the Christmas celebrations. Our God is not beyond the stars, far away in the heavens. Our God came to be with us, suffering with us, hurting with us, bleeding with us. That's the message of Christmas.

There is uncertainty and God came to lead us through it.

Think of the uncertainty in the lives of Mary & Joseph as they hurriedly packed up their meager belongings to leave Bethlehem & head for Egypt. Mary & Joseph fled to Egypt, not knowing where they would stay. They didn't know what the future held for them. All they knew was that God was leading them.

They had been told by an angel that Jesus was to be the Savior, that He would save His people from their sins. But what was their responsibility in this? How were they to raise the Son of God? What were they to do next? And what did the future hold for them? There was so much uncertainty in it all. Our lives are uncertain too. Teenagers wonder if they will ever graduate from High school. And if they do, will they be accepted into the college of their choice? And if they are, will they be able to pass their courses?

Those who are older wonder if they'll still have a job next year - if they'll ever get their house paid for, if their children will ever amount to anything. And that pain that has been bothering them recently - Is it something serious?

There is death but God came to overcome it.

There was brutal death long ago in Bethlehem as the cries of children pierced the air innocent children, victims of a king's insanity & selfishness.

But one child was saved, carried off to Egypt. Yet that child one day became a victim himself, but His death would be different. He died on a cross, not for His own sins, but for the sins of others.

And because Jesus became the sacrifice for our sins, death was defeated. Yes, there is death in our world, but God so loved the world that He sent His Son to overcome it.

Death is real, & it will always be here, just as suffering is here, & uncertainty is here. But this is the message of Christmas, "God takes away the sting of death, because Jesus Christ conquered death & has given us victory over it." It's true! This world is not our home, & the grave is not our goal.

God, through Jesus Christ, has come to help us in times of suffering, to lead us in times of uncertainty, & to give us victory over death. And once again, today He offers Himself to us, & He waits for us to respond to His invitation.



1. WHAT THOUGHT DO YOU HAVE THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON?
2. HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THE SALVATION OF YOUR LOVED ONES, RELATIVES OR FRIENDS?
3. HOW WILL YOU MAKE THIS SEASON MORE MEANINGFUL THAN JUST GIFTS & PRESENTS?