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Christmas Message – The God Who Came Way, Way Down
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When God came down at Christmas, he came all the way down



Down to tiny earth from the great expanse of his heavenly dwelling
To a small blue planet
That had been the object of his affection since the beginning of time
A planet that had rejected him time and again down through the centuries

He came all the way down....

When God came down at Christmas, he came all the way down

Not just to the planet but
Down as far as he could go on the planet
Born to a teenage peasant girl
In a stable, in a tiny town called Bethlehem



In the dead of night

When God came down at Christmas, he came all the way down

This infant God was wrapped in bands of cloth tightly wound around him
He could not move his arms or legs –such was the custom of maternal care at the time

Small and dependent, weak and vulnerable, unable to move, he was held...



He who held the world, was now held himself, by his created ones
And put at their mercy

When God came down at Christmas he came all the way down

The angelic birth announcement of infinite God
Came to weary shepherds, scrapping out a meager living



In the dark of night...

The silent night

The holy night

That night

The dark sky lit up like a torch, and these scrappy watchers of the sheep were terrified



Their eyes had grown accustomed to the dark, of course
As our eyes, also become accustomed to the darkness, living in this fallen world where evil seems to have its way too often, and we wonder, "Is there any hope?"
Hope came that night from another realm – Gods realm – outside of our own

When God came down at Christmas he came all the way down

In that blinding light of a birth announcement, in an obscure field outside of tiny Bethlehem
For just a moment, God's reality, the heavenly realm, could be seen and heard and experienced

As the sky lit up...and the dark field became illuminated...every grass blade outlined in white light...
The shepherds caught a glimpse of the brilliance and joy of that place, where God dwells
That place of vast incomparable glory, and overwhelming power, and majesty and beauty
The motley shepherds stood there transfixed, with mouths open, staring, shaking, unnerved at this heavenly intrusion into their darkness



Why would God want to come here? To them?

No one, in all the stories they had heard shepherds tell one another, no one had ever spoken about an angelic visitation in a dark field full of sheep.

Stories of bears and lions yes.

Stories of finding lost sheep in caverns and rescuing them from being trapped on



Jagged cliffs. Yes.

And how they had risked life and limb with their staff and slings to defend the weakest of the sheep - those were the ones that would so often get picked off from the outside of the herd

And the shepherds would fight for them, and most times rescue them, and bring them back, attend to their wounds, and heal them.

The shepherds had scars on their body to prove the story true...

But never had there been a story of an angelic appearance to shepherds before this night

Bears and lions they did not tremble for they knew what to do...but this birth announcement brought them to their knees in fear
So unexpected. So outside their frame of reference.

Little did they know that the one they would soon worship, lying in a manger, *would also call himself a shepherd, just like them*

Defending the weak, mending the broken

And he would have scars to prove it on his body, just like they did

As he battled the forces of darkness in an excruciating death

For the final descent of this infant God would be a descent down, down, down, to a cursed cross that would redeem us all

Forgive our sins and make us right with God



When God came down at Christmas he came all the way down

And then the joyful words “**Don’t be afraid**” ring out through the night sky

How could the terrified shepherds not be afraid?

Its scary when our reality is shaken...its terrifying when the living God breaks in upon us...we realize our frailty, our darkness, our separation, our despair

The contrast is appalling...in those moments we realize how far we have fallen from grace! Yet at those moments too we realize how far down he came, to rescue us...what kind of love is that?

Timothy Keller writes in his new book *The Hidden Message of Christmas* that even though Christmas has become secularized, the deep religious or spiritual meaning of Christmas keeps intruding upon the secular.

At Christmas, all of a sudden lights start to appear – on trees, and storefronts and on



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Parking lot poles and in yards all over. There's special streets we go visit, and squares and malls just to see the beauty and the festive glow...

When you see these lights folks, remember...

That the emphasis of light at Christmas out there in the secular world, comes from the Christian belief that the world's hope comes from outside of it.

Not from within it

Because we are too sinful, off course, lost and blind to find our way within our own context...

God himself takes the journey down into our grungy mortality and declares "good news...I'm here with you...for awhile...from the outside...the light of the word has come down...follow me and you will not be lost in the darkness anymore."

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Good news intrudes, light invades, joy comes down to us -from the outside -

And when that happens we may be terrified...yeah...cause we aren't used to that light

And yet the message to all of us this Christmas is "Do not be afraid. This is good news."

This is the hope you've been seeking.

This is the great joy your heart longs for come down for you..cause

When God came down at Christmas he came all the way down

Into our sad hopeless state and declared "My love for you still stands. Don't ever doubt it. I am with you...Immanuel - God with us - has come."

(Let's read in unison the angel's message)

"Do not be afraid,...I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all people. Unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

A manger.

That was a huge sign for the shepherds.

The shepherds heard that word – “manger” And they get it....Christ was poor like they



are poor

Only a poor child would be born in a manger.

I love this image because it reminds us how far down God came...to be with us, to be like us...

And the shepherds now get that this Messiah is poor...and they think

Maybe, if this Savior was born for them, and he is poor like they are poor, they could dare and go and find him just as they are...

They get so excited! What did they say? (say it with me)

Let us go and see this thing!

All of a sudden the shepherds, in their poverty can identify with the one who has been born in poverty for them.

You know after years in the ministry the most common theme that I hear from people (and its conveyed to me in all different ways) is that most people feel that they are somehow too unworthy to receive God's favor, his grace, his forgiveness.

They don't really think that God has a vested interest in them.

People don't say it in those words, but it seeps around the edges of countless conversations I have had with people

On some level people believe God couldn't be totally for them

They feel that they have not lived a good enough life

They haven't forgiven well enough, they haven't made right choices, they've not stayed committed, they haven't served enough, been grateful enough, or read the Bible or prayed enough...whatever their weakness or frailty - they think about *that*- it becomes about them and what they are doing - and because of that they keep God at arms length...

If you happen to be in that camp, and I know I was for a long time

Just so you know, the message of Christmas is the exact opposite of our human tendency to think this way
Whatever your poverty – your issue or your weakness its no excuse for staying away from Jesus
Because its not about what we have done or haven't done or how well we measure up
Its irrelevant...because Christmas is all about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

When God came down at Christmas he came all the way down

To you and to me...Precisely so we wouldn't be afraid...so we wouldn't stay away thinking about how unworthy we are
We would instead focus on Jesus, this amazing gift!
And we would get the simple, albeit unbelievable truth that God *wants to be with us*, and that he identifies with our poverty
The idea of Christmas is that we would approach him with the same enthusiasm this Christmas as those shepherds did...
Because God did this for us without our being worthy of his great affection

What if you believed right now with your whole heart that you didn't have to do anything more; pray longer, try harder, be better.

What if right now the light dawned from outside yourself and you heard God say to you, "Come, just as you are. Just receive the gift that has been given and rejoice. I've come a long way down to show you how much I want to be with you...It's a new day. Its good news."

The shepherds understood this truth that day.
Smelling of livestock with sweat on their brow they aren't getting all gussied up to see Christ the Lord / they aren't changing their clothes first, taking a dip, putting on deodorant
Cause they know its not about them and how worthy they are
They just go, right away, enthusiastically, just as they are, ...with a spring in their step
Let us go and see this thing that has happened!



Almost sounds like something kids would say...kids are so enthusiastic..."Cmon! Let us go see! (ever have a kid pulling on your arm, egging you on...c'mon...let's go! the root of enthusiasm is actually "in theo" which in God)

Did you say that this morning when you got up for church?
Let us go...and see this thing...this amazing gift...given to us outside of ourselves
from God...this light of the world...this hope...that comes from the heart of Divine
love for me
I can't wait to approach the manger!
I can't wait to worship Jesus!
God Almighty wants to be with **me**...just blows me away...

The shepherds find Jesus just as the angels had told them they would



And they worship him
They tell everyone about him – they spread the word
How could they not? They were so excited...God had come down, down, down, to
them...to say, "I want to be with you. Do not be afraid."

The shepherds return glorifying and praising God
For all that they had seen and heard

When God came down at Christmas he came all the way down.

Let's worship God with joy this morning and sing his praise with all our heart as we
close our service... ..praise God for his great love for you and what **he has done** for us
in Christ Jesus....lets approach the manger and worship with gratitude

Th Love that will not let us go, friends
Longing that we grasp the incomprehensible and yet tangible truth of Immanuel...
God with us in and through it all
Specifically, intimately, tangibly, personally, arrives in our darkness to shepherd us
home – back to the God who has great affection for us
From whose love for us and for the world absolutely cannot separate us

And never had anyone given them a gift of any value

The words came to them loud and clear that night as they stood there shaking

faces with wide clear infant eyes
And knowing them

When God can down at Christmas he came way...way...down