

# Dec 3. The Astonishing Story of Christmas.

**“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger”.**

(Luke 2:16)

Step back for a moment and consider again just how astonishing the Christmas story is. The God of all creation being born as a baby. Myriad angels crowding the skies and singing their praise. Wise men following a star, bearing gold and frankincense and myrrh. And Shepherds on a hillside. Into this grand and supernatural scene, God calls forth a group of ordinary shepherds. Men with without much status or education. Men with blistered hands and calloused hearts. In the midst of so much majesty, what could such common, everyday people as shepherds have to offer? Perhaps they brought along a lamb, or a blanket, or a lantern for the stable. We are not told. But we do know this: the shepherds hurried to be present. They hastened to respond to what they had been given. And they opened their hearts, witnesses to the miracle.

As we prepare for Christmas this year, as we write our lists, buy presents and send cards, are there ways we can follow their example. In the midst of our routines and additional busyness, will we allow ourselves to be interrupted by the divine. To stop and listen for angel voices. To gaze upon the face of God. To come to Jesus just as we are.

When writing about the subject of prayer, C. S. Lewis wrote “We must lay before him what is in us, not what ought to be in us”. In other words, we come to Jesus not with a mask, not with a pretence that we are better than we are, but simply as ourselves. As the shepherds did. Whatever else they may have brought to the stable, they laid aside their plans and chose to present themselves to Emmanuel, God-with-us.

In this busy Advent season, what does the Lord require of me? Surely, in part at least, it is to be alert to the Lord speaking into my very ordinary life, to respond quickly to what I see and hear, and to be no more and no less than who I truly am. And having done that, to discover — astonishing as it is—that that is exactly the gift that he has been waiting for.