

God's Greatest Gift

A long, long time ago, in a town very far away, there was a man named Joseph who loved a young lady named Mary. Mary had been told by God that she would be the mother of a very special baby boy. She was so excited! She just couldn't wait to hold her baby in her arms. She would make clothes for the baby, and Joseph, being a carpenter, would make things the baby would need, like a cradle and child-sized furniture. They anxiously waited for the birth of their son. It seemed that the day just couldn't come fast enough.

One day they received news that the king wanted everyone to be counted. He didn't want to just count all the people in one town, or two towns. He wanted to count all the people in the whole kingdom. The king didn't think it would be good enough to simply go house to house to count how many people there were. He wanted every person to go back to the town in which they were born in order to be counted.

Mary and Joseph packed their clothes and other items for the long journey. No one had cars or trucks back in those days, so they had a donkey or a camel to carry their load. Sometimes they would walk, and sometimes Mary would ride on the donkey to rest her sore feet. Day after day and night after night they kept traveling. When nighttime came, they would try to find a room at an inn so they could get a good night's sleep. But sometimes with so many people traveling it was not possible to find a room, because they were all taken already.

It was a very long, dusty, and very tiring trip. Finally one night they saw lights off in the distance. "We are almost there," Joseph told Mary. "How beautiful the city of Bethlehem is from here!" Mary exclaimed. "I wonder if it is as beautiful inside!"

Once inside the city gates, Joseph tried to get a room at the inns. Unfortunately, the inn keepers had to turn them down. "I'm sorry," said one, "There just aren't any rooms left."

"We have been traveling for days, and we are so tired. Are you sure there is no place for us to get some rest?" Joseph asked. It was getting very late and he was getting quite frustrated, but he was trying to be kind and patient.

Seeing the problem and feeling compassion, the inn keeper said, "There are no rooms, but I could offer you the stable." Now a stable is another name for a barn. It is a place the inn keeper kept the animals of the guests at his inn. It wasn't a good place to sleep. There were no beds, and it smelled bad because of all the animals, but it was a place they could be out of the weather and lie down for the night.

Joseph thanked the inn keeper for his kindness and led the donkey to the stable. Mary gathered piles of straw to make a bed and they laid down for the night and were able to sleep.

Suddenly, Mary woke up. She turned to wake up Joseph. "What is it?" Joseph asked sleepily. "I think the baby is coming tonight!" Mary said excitedly. Joseph bolted upright, forgetting he was sleepy.

That night the special baby that had been promised to them was born. Mary cried for joy and cuddled him closely. Joseph took his turn holding the baby too. They didn't take long to decide what they were going to name the baby, because God had already told them His name. Joseph held the baby up and said "His name will be called JESUS."

They wrapped him in a soft cloth to keep him warm, and Mary made a bed of straw for him in the manger, which is usually where the animals eat. What a wonderful night it was there in the stable! Baby Jesus, the GREATEST GIFT TO THE WORLD, was born.

Bible Verse to Learn

"... and they shall call his name Emmanuel" (Matthew 1:23)

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