

Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Virginia



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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND PRELATE

The night that Joseph and Mary entered Bethlehem there must have been a lot going on. Many travelers were visiting because of the requirement of fulfilling mandatory census. The city was probably very busy. We all know the story well. There were so many people and so much happening that there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the inn, so Mary had to give birth in a stable.

The Son of God was born, yet the people all around this great event were too busy to take note of it. But is there really any difference today? You can't miss Christmas in our world today. It's all around us. Walmart, and many other retailers, began putting up their Christmas displays shortly after the Independence Day decorations came down. It's obvious that we are not going to miss Christmas. It is too commercialized for that to happen. Christmas is everywhere, but a lot of people are so busy with Christmas that they miss Jesus. We can get so caught up in the middle of all the busyness, buying, and partying that we miss the real meaning of Christmas, just like the people in Bethlehem did on the night of Jesus' birth.

But there was one group that did not miss it: the shepherds. Luke 2:8-11 tells us, “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

Shepherds were not highly esteemed in those days. They were looked down on by most people and had to stay outside of the city walls to do their job. The nature of their work prevented them from being allowed to regularly attend temple service. And they were not trusted by people. In fact, their honesty was so doubted that shepherds were not allowed to be witnesses in court. Still, it was to the shepherds that God chose to reveal the birth of the Savior. And it was these same shepherds who were the first to visit and worship the newborn Christ child. Now there are some theological reasons as to why these shepherds were chosen for this, but that’s for another time. The important thing is that these men made a point to seek out Jesus in the middle of everything else going on. They were not too busy to seek Christ in Christmas.

That is what it is all about: unto us a savior is born, God is with us. Because of this we have hope. We have a future to look forward too, all because of Jesus. At the time of his birth, all but a few people missed it. The religious leaders, King Herod, the people living and visiting Bethlehem. None of them were aware of this enormous event happening in their midst.

We can, and should, celebrate Christmas with decorations, festivities, family gatherings, special programs, and the many other things that come with the season. But it is the birth of our savior that we are celebrating, and if we center all those other things around that then we will not miss Jesus.

I think the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 provides us a good example of how to do this. If you remember, Jesus was visiting, and Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She was busy at work while Mary sat at Jesus’ feet listening to what he said. When Martha complained, Jesus told her that while there are many things going on, the one thing that was really needed to be done was the thing that Mary had chosen to do. So, while we will all find things to keep us busy this Christmas

season, let us remember to take time to sit at Jesus' feet. To praise God and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior. To remember that God broke into human history in an unexpected way to bring light into our darkness.

And he still comes. He comes to those not expecting or even seeking Him. He comes to those who are going about the ordinary business of living. He does not care about our station in life. We are all just as valuable in His eyes. As we celebrate Christmas this year, let's remember to make room for Jesus in our lives this holiday season, and beyond. And let us take that good news into the world around us through our words and actions as we help to share the gift of Jesus to all.

Enjoy the blessings of the Christmas season as we celebrate and focus on the birth of our Savior.

Merry Christmas
Rick Saunders
Grand Prelate