

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

God came into the lives of Mary and Joseph, they prepared for a son of whom the angel said “the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” An unlikely birth to an unlikely young lady in an unlikely place. That’s how our story starts, and we find that God has turned everything, the pyramid of human values, worldly values, everything we think of as natural human order, upside down.

But God has done that practically since the beginning, Abraham and Sarah an old couple way past child bearing years by faith become the ancestors of millions. A shepherd kid slays a giant using a sling, the shepherd kid commits a murder, adultery and is anointed king. An army of 300 routs an army of 10,000, and one prophet outshines hundreds of false prophets, a prostitute saves God’s servants.

And now a young lady, a girl by our standards, becomes mother to the Son of God while a young carpenter becomes the baby’s father. Shepherds on the bottom of the social ladder in that time and place become the first outside of his parents to see the new born King.

Everything God does is unexpected, everyone he uses is someone society considers marginal, even unclean. And this newborn baby boy named Jesus, Emmanuel, wasn’t born in a palace to royal parents, nor into the family of temple priests, really it was just another insignificant birth to insignificant parents in an insignificant town, witnessed by other insignificant people.

But God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Get that? The world, all people have access to the Son of God, the Savior, the Messiah, mercy, forgiveness, life eternal, to God’s own heart. Through Jesus, the Christ, the Son of Man, Son of David born in the city of David called Bethlehem.

Thank, praise and bless our God that his ways are different from human ways, that he has turned the world upside down so the love he has for all people is shown first to the poor, the humble, the insignificant. We are with the shepherds, and get to peer into that manger to see the Messiah who is as approachable as our best friend.

And we see how Jesus continues God’s pattern of choosing the least to change the world, fisherman, tax collector, no-accounts. Then we see Jesus make himself the most vulnerable suffering torture, crucifixion, death, burial. But as in our story to night, that’s not the end, what began in Bethlehem some two thousand years ago has not ended yet, the story isn’t over.

And for us, no matter where we look everything we see makes us vulnerable, even in our entertainment. We see hatred, anger, violence, threats to our freedom, our health, our identity. Rising costs of daily life. It goes on. We falter in the perplexities of health, life and death. And we realize we are powerless.

But the Christmas story is good news for us, the vulnerable. For to you this day is born in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. A child wrapped in bands of cloth, the way to the Father and the Father's heart, full of love for the world, for you and me. From the manger to the cross of Christ, this Messiah in a manger. A manger which gives way to an empty tomb, and we find that vulnerability is no more. As insignificant as we might be, simple, flawed, sinners all, the love of God demands us and we are his. AMEN!

Merry Christmas to all!