

# The Nativity of Jesus

## Luke 2 8-20

*As told by a blind companion to the shepherds*

We had been living in the fields for some time and on that night we were sitting out to look after the sheep. The shepherds were keeping watch, but they liked to have me with them because in the darkness they could not see if there were any dangers about, but I, being blind, could hear any wild animals approaching or hear if a sheep fell down or wandered off. Besides, I was very good at knowing the different voices of the individual sheep, so keen was my hearing, and so if one wandered away or got separated from the rest I could tell the shepherds where it was from the direction of the bleating.

We were sitting together trying to keep warm and talking together when I got the sense that something else was in the vicinity. I started to listen, thinking that there must be something out there targeting the sheep for they had gone very still and very quiet. In fact the whole world seemed to be holding its breath. I thought I detected a beautiful scent as well, like something – unearthly, breaking through the sharp scent of the cold air, the smell of the earth and the vegetation and the smell of my companions around me telling any blind person like myself exactly what they had for their last meal.

'Wait, friends' I said, trying to listen intently 'I am sure something is coming'. Suddenly my companions screamed, the ground shook and the air around me seemed to quiver. I could not understand what was happening to make them so terrified. They shrieked 'the light, the light!' and then were struck dumb apparently with shock. What was it? An explosion? An earthquake? But I could still smell that unearthly fragrance and although all the hairs were standing up on my arms and the back of my neck it was not so much due to fright as to the certainty that I was in the middle of something amazing. And because I was not troubled by the glory that astonished and terrified my companions, I knew immediately that this was not death or destruction come upon us but something *wonderful*. 'It is the Lord!' I said.

I heard them all gasp, and then words of hope and gracious speech. 'Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. To you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' I cried aloud with joy at this news and was suddenly aware of singing and praise, full of joy and wonder. Then it was gone. Silence descended once more and the air began to be full of animal sounds and the sighing of the wind once more.

The shepherds seemed to be completely overwhelmed by what they had seen, so I had to urge them. 'Come on, let's go and find this sign, this child that has been born'. They kept saying 'Did you see that? Did you see that?'

**'No of course I didn't' I said, 'it was an angel of the Lord and I heard well enough what the angel said, too. We have been given good news, - we should go and share it.'**

**We made our way to Bethlehem and after asking around, discovered that a child had been born in a shelter outside an inn. We went together to find out.**

**I knew at once that this was the place. There was the warm comforting smell of animals, the milky smell of a new born child and that strange unearthly fragrance again. I could smell straw and blood and hear quiet voices filled with joy. The shepherds were talking to the people there, a woman named Mary and a man named Joseph. I came closer to the family and held out my hands. 'Is it real?' I asked 'what the angel said?' My companions grabbed hold of me, trying to pull me away from the family and I knew that I was not worthy to be part of that holy family. But still, I held out my hands feeling towards the Messiah. Then to my amazement and lifelong gratitude my hands were guided and I felt the rough stone of a sort of feeding trough, then a different roughness: swaddling cloths around a tiny breathing form. I felt warm light breath on my fingers and the quick touch of the finest baby hair before I drew away again.**

**The shepherds took me with them and we told anyone who would listen about the marvellous thing God had done on that night. Some would not listen to mere shepherds and a blind man, but some were amazed at our story and wanted to find out the truth for themselves.**

