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Christmas: extraordinary, not ordinary

By Elise L. Moore

The night probably began like any other – clouds scuttling across a darkening sky, the moon rising, with stars piercing the blackness. A few shepherds, maybe friends from a local village or from long nights spent wakefully, gathered their flocks together.

In the ordinary, though, something extraordinary happened.

The night filled with light, and “the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.” But a voice like an angel spoke: “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” (Luke 2:9-11).

What was this? The Savior, or deliverer of the world, was prophesied more than 700 years before in the distant days of King Ahaz and King Hezekiah (see Isaiah 7:14), yet here were angel messages communicating now to these shepherds of the Messiah or Anointed One. The shepherds glanced at one another. Had the ancient prophecy been fulfilled?

The angel said “And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” Before the shepherds could pose a question, “suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” And then the vision vanished (Luke 2:12-14).

We all know the rest of the story. The shepherds hustled to Bethlehem, found Jesus precisely where promised, and rejoiced all the way home, repeating the wonder to everyone who would listen. Jesus Christ grew and indeed showed everyone the way of salvation, not only in his world at his point in time, but for all the world throughout all ages. He showed them how Christ, the healing Truth that Jesus represented and proved, saves us from the crushing hopelessness of materiality, sin, disease, and death.

Millions acknowledge Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy. Yet billions know nothing of the Christ promise of eternal life and salvation from sin and sickness, or have rejected it. The healing, saving message of Christ needs to be repeated. Light still needs to dawn in the darkness of misery, materialism, and sensuality. This light is known as the Christ, the word of Truth, which comes to comfort us and cure all ailments. God's Word yet speaks and repeats the glories of God's infinite love even today.

We are the shepherds. Our flock may be few or many. Perhaps we are caring only for a few family members, a few co-workers, a few friends. Yet the wakeful shepherd of today watches through life's dark moments for spiritual revelation. It may appear as a sudden light or come like a clear voice, too startling to ignore. Often it comes as quiet intuitions, thoughts from God, leading us to Truth. Or it may be like a silent star shining above, quietly guiding thought to a glimpse of promised health and safety.

The Christmas story reminds us to expect this spiritual awakening and to be prepared to receive the healing, saving Christ. The human Jesus who preached, healed, and saved was crucified, resurrected, and ascended. Yet, the divinity of Jesus, the Christ, never left and is still present to preach, teach, heal, save, and resurrect all those willing to listen and obey. Christ is the divine message from God to men and women, piercing the darkness of doubt or despair.

In a Christmas message, Mary Baker Eddy, who established the Monitor and founded the church that publishes it, wrote of the Christ coming today: "Let the sentinels of Zion's watch-towers shout once again, 'Unto

us a child is born, unto us a son is given.' In different ages the divine idea assumes different forms, according to humanity's needs. In this age it assumes, more intelligently than ever before, the form of Christian healing. This is the babe we are to cherish" ("Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896," p. 370). The babe we are to cherish is the Christ-healing, which we can each practice and experience.

The Christmas story is your story and my story. We are the shepherds of today. Christ is present and ready to dawn in each heart, breaking through ordinary human views of life and death to reveal the extraordinary or divine reality of salvation and eternal life.