



READ: Luke 2:6-20 (NirV)

While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. That's because there was no guest room where they could stay. There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said, "May glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!" The angels left and went into heaven. Then the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby. The baby was lying in the manger. After the shepherds had seen him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary kept all these things like a secret treasure in her heart. She thought about them over and over. The shepherds returned. They gave glory and praise to God. Everything they had seen and heard was just as they had been told.

ENTER THE STORY:

IT'S TIME! We are finally ready to celebrate the arrival of the promised Messiah. Isn't it interesting that the title for this section of the devotions is "Enter the story," when that is *EXACTLY* what we are talking about today? It's what Christmas is all about!

On the night of Jesus' birth, God himself entered the story he had been writing for a very long time.

We have been on quite a journey the past few weeks, and we have learned a lot, but there is *ONE* thing in all of the stories that stands out... God is *NOT* like us, and he does things very differently than we do!

A King born in a stable outside with the animals? Who would have chosen that for their grand entrance? Not me! Surely, God announced the birth of his Son to the most important people, right? Nope! God sent his angels to shepherds outside in a field.

Have you ever stopped to wonder why God announced the birth of his Son to shepherds? It is because Jesus was no ordinary baby. He was the perfect, spotless Lamb of God, sent in the most humble way, *not to make others serve him, but to serve others and to give up his life to buy our freedom!* (Matthew 20:28 paraphrased).

THIS is why God sent his angels to shepherds to announce the birth of his Son!

YES! God entered his own story by sending Jesus, our Immanuel - God with us, but he is also our Savior and "...the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29)

This is what we celebrate at Christmas! Jesus came to save us from our sins and bring us back to God, who loves us with a never-ending, unstoppable love.

Today, as we celebrate Christmas in all sorts of fun ways, let's remind ourselves that Jesus makes everything better!

- As we look around at all the beautiful, sparkly lights on houses and on our trees, let's remember that Jesus is the Light of the world, and whoever follows him will not walk in darkness but will have the Light of life!
- As we feast on our Christmas dinners, let's remember that Jesus is the bread of life, and whoever comes to him will not be hungry, and whoever believes in him will never thirst. Let's pray that God would develop in us a hunger and thirst for more of his righteousness.
- As we give each other gifts and presents, let's remember that God is the ULTIMATE gift-giver! He has given us the BEST gift ever in his Son, who paid the price for our sins so that we could enter the presence of God!

 **PRAY:** *God, we are always in awe of how loving you are. You are worthy of all our praise and glory. As we enjoy all of the wonderful celebrations of Christmas today with our family and friends, help us remember that Jesus, our Immanuel, is also our Sacrificial Lamb, the Good Shepherd, and our future King!*