

**Confirmation Class: 2008 - 2009
St Barnabas Episcopal Church**

December 21, 2008

The Nativity Story

BACKGROUND: Let's look at the word "nativity"...

The word "nativity" as explained in Webster's dictionary. Its origin is represented in Middle English "nativite", and from Medieval Latin "nativitat" which means "birth". Meaning: the process or circumstances of being born, the birth of Jesus, the place of origin

The Bible's definition

The birth of Jesus, described in two of the Gospels (Matthew and Luke). When Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem – a rough journey, they found that there was no room for them in the local inn. Mary gave birth to Jesus in a common stable and laid him in a manger (a feeding trough for livestock). Christians believe that Jesus' birth fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies and was attended by miraculous events, such as a star above Bethlehem that drew local shepherds as well as the Wise Men, or Magi, from a distant land. The Nativity is celebrated at Christmas.

READ: Luke 2:1-38 (pg 1083), Matthew 2:1-23 (pg 1005)

There are two accounts of "The Nativity Story" in the New Testament.

The Play...

The Innkeeper Story

Cast:

Innkeeper

Innkeeper's wife

Joseph

Mary—great with child

3 Shepherds

3 Wisemen

Opening scene: Audience is seated and the Innkeeper and his wife come down the aisle and see all the people.

Innkeeper: My! Look at all these people. I am sure they are hungry and in need of a place to stay! This taxing business is great for my business! I am gonna make some money this week! That's what it is all about anyway! Money!!!

Wife: (turning to her husband) You know, this is going to be a lot of work for all of us to feed and house all these people! And to think it is just because Caesar Augustus wanted to tax everyone. But, we sure can use the extra money, I guess.

Innkeeper: You guess? I know for sure we can use the money. The inn needs a new roof and we can add on extra rooms. This may turn into a yearly thing and we need to be ready! (Turning to the people) Thank you all for coming to Bethlehem!! I own and operate the best Inn in town and we have a lovely dining hall! Please come on down and see for yourselves! I know you must be hungry and some are in need of a place to spend the night! My rates are very reasonable! (Brings out a little poke from his pocket and rattles a few coins inside for all to hear) I would love to be your servants for the night or however long you intend to stay in our humble town. Please, let's all go downstairs to the dining hall and enjoy a meal together! Come on!! (He turns to his wife and motions for her to help him herd the people downstairs. He keeps rattling his little poke.)

The Audience goes downstairs and gets ready to eat soup. Someone asks the blessing and all begin to eat. Chocolate coins could be placed on the tables.

The Innkeeper comes around and talks to a lot of people and asks them to pay him for their meal—using the chocolate coins. He rakes in the money and his wife is busy seeing that everyone is eating and enjoying themselves.

There is a loud knock at a door and the Innkeeper turns and starts slowly to it. There is another loud knock! He gets to the door and there is Joseph and Mary. Mary is in labor and holding her stomach and moaning loudly. Joseph is shook up and wanting to find a place for the night quickly.

Innkeeper: Who is at my door?

Joseph: Sir, we are desperate for a place to stay the night—my wife is in need of a place to lay down!! (Mary yells loudly)

Innkeeper: Well, I HAVE NO ROOM IN MY INN, but perhaps you could come back tomorrow and I'll see what is available.

Joseph: We need a place now!! Maybe we'll try down the street. (They leave)

Wife: (She has come over to her husbands side) Who was that?

Innkeeper: Some fellow and his wife looking for a place to stay. But, we are have no rooms tonight, so I sent them down the street.

Wife: The woman looked ill.

Innkeeper: Well, they'll find someplace. (He goes back to socializing with the diners)

In a few minutes, there is another loud knock on the door. The Innkeeper goes back to the door and opens it to find Joseph and Mary there again.

Innkeeper: Didn't you find anything? I told you I was full up and can't help you out!

Joseph: Please sir, do you have anything? A closet? A Storeroom? An outbuilding?

Please my wife is great with child and about to give birth and we are desperate!!

Wife: (she has hurried over and tugs on the innkeeper's sleeve) Don't we have anything for that poor woman? What about the barn? We could move some of the animals over and give them a stall? It would at least be shelter!

Innkeeper: No, woman! WE ARE FULL – NO VACANCY!! Now, you folks are gonna have to go on and find something somewhere else! (He slams the door in their face. The wife hangs her head and wrings her hands)

Wife: That woman is in labor! She needs to lay down somewhere. I don't see what harm it would be to let them have just a corner in the stable. I'll take out some blankets and fresh straw and you could charge them the same as a room!!

Innkeeper: (Stroking his beard) Well. . . if I charge the same as a room. . . then. . . I guess it would work. Let's just see if they come back and if they do, then I'll put them in the stable.

Wife: OK! I sure do hope they come back.

(After a couple of minutes, there is another knock at the door and the wife runs to get to it and there is Joseph and Mary–Mary is very much in pain and weary!!)

Wife: Good, you came back!! Would you mind bedding down in the stable? I'll bring blankets and fresh straw! Would that work?

Joseph: Yes, that would be wonderful! Thank you so very much!!

Innkeeper: The price is the same as a room, young man! No discounts for the stable–it's a very nice stable!

Joseph: That's fine! We'll take it. Can we get to it now?? My wife. . . . (Mary is screaming in pain by now!)

Wife: Yes!! This way! (She leads them out and they go upstairs. The Innkeeper continues chatting with the guests until they are almost finished.)

Innkeeper: Well, now that your bellies are full, would you like for me to show you all to your rooms? Right upstairs!! Fine rooms they are! So glad you are staying with us tonight and don't forget to stop in again next year!! We'd love to see you!! (He jangles his poke of coins) Guess we could stop by and check on that couple – just to see that they don't need anything. This way! (He leads the group back upstairs to the sanctuary)

Scene 2

When all get back upstairs and settled in, we find Mary already holding Jesus in swaddling clothes with a manger near and Joseph weary and resting on a bale of hay. The wife is coming in with some blankets.

Wife: Well, here you go–Oh MY!! The baby is already here!! Can I take a peek at the little feller? Is it a boy?

Mary: (Shakes her head yes) Yes, it's a boy and His name is Jesus! We are so proud of Him.

Wife: I know you are, is it your first?

Mary: Yes.

Wife: Well, that makes Him so very special!! I have 3 boys and 1 girl. Love little ones!! They are God's gift!!!

Mary: Yes, we know this Child is a special gift from God!! (She looks at Joseph)

Wife: Here are some blankets and do you need any more food? Water?

Joseph: No thank you. We are fine. We have food and water and the blankets are very nice. We need to get some sleep right now. Thanks so very much for letting us have the stable. I was at the end of my rope!

Wife: Not a problem. My husband is so busy with all the guests in town this week with the taxes and all!! Our business hasn't been all that great until now, so he is trying to make the most of all the visitors! He is quite the businessman.

Joseph: Yes, I gathered that. Thanks again!

(Wife exits and we see her talking in one corner to her husband)

Wife: I went out and checked on the young couple in the stable and she has already had that baby! He is such a cutie! It's their first—remember when we had our first? (Innkeeper just shrugs) I just love babies!!

Innkeeper: Well, if we need to make sure all the other guests are fine, too. They are paying customers and we need to make sure they return again! They all may need blankets! Get busy or we won't have any money to fix this place up like I want to.

Wife: All you think about is money! There is more to life than money, you know!

Innkeeper: You sure like to spend it! So, you'd better get to making some of it! See to those guests, woman!

(Wife busies herself with gathering blankets and pillows and exits offstage. Innkeeper sits down and appears to take a nap.

Some Angels come down the aisle and stand behind Mary and Joseph quietly.

Mary cuddles the baby and appears to be humming to Him.

3-4 Shepherds come down the aisle)

#1 Shepherd: I have never seen such a bright light!! And heard singing like that! I'll never forget this night as long as I live!

#2 Shepherd: There was a multitude of angels in the heavens – why, I thought I was dreaming!

#3 Shepherd: What did the angel say? I was trying to settle down the sheep!

#1 Shepherd: "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 Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger!!

#2 Shepherd: And then a multitude of them appeared saying: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men!!

#3 Shepherd: I always miss the good stuff!! Just because I am the youngest!! That's why I always have to go out and check on the sheep! Why can't. . . .

#1 Shepherd: Hush!! Didn't we bring you along with us? We could have left you out there now, but here you are and you are grumbling about it!!

#3 Shepherd: That's because I saw the star first!!

#2 Shepherd: Like we wouldn't have seen it! It is huge!! I have never in all my years of being outside seen such a bright star!

#1 Shepherd: Well, here we are. He must be inside. Wonder if He really is a baby?

(They get closer to the manger and peek inside. Mary watches them cautiously.)

#2 Shepherd: We just want to see for ourselves! Let us tell you what happened while we were in the fields with our sheep!

#3 Shepherd: An angel came to us and told us there would be a baby born tonight and He would be the Savior of the world!! The Christ!!

#1 Shepherd: There were a lot of angels!! They told us to come and see the baby! We followed a star and found Him! Can we just see Him?

Mary: I guess so, but He is sleeping, so be quiet. (They all ooh and Aah over the baby) (Back over in the Innkeeper's corner, he rouses up and sniffs! The wife comes back in and holds her nose.)

Wife: What is that smell?

Innkeeper: Why I don't know!! Oh yes I do----Shepherds!! I smell shepherds! They always smell like sheep and my nose can pick that smell up a long ways off!! I hope they aren't coming here! I'll lose all my guests! Why, they don't bathe but once a year, if that!!

Wife: My goodness!! It does smell close.

Innkeeper: You don't reckon they have slipped in out at the stable! I can't have shepherds here! I'll lose all my business and think of losing all that money!! (He jangles his poke) I'll go out and check! (He goes over to the stable) What's going on here?

Joseph: They are shepherds who were told by angels to come and see the baby. They just got here.

Innkeeper: (to shepherds) You can't stay here! You will cause me to lose all my paying customers! You must leave now!! Get out!!

#1 Shepherd: We know, we smell awful, but it's hard to bathe out in the fields for months at a time. But, we had to come and see the baby!! An angel sent us!

Innkeeper: Well, you've come and seen - now get going! (He shoos them out, muttering to himself) If you want to come back again, stop by the bathhouse and clean up first! Whew!! (He turns to Joseph)

Do you folks need anything? If you are going to have guests out here, I'll have to charge extra.

Joseph: No, sir, we didn't expect them. We don't need anything except some quiet rest.

Innkeeper: Good. (He stomps back to his chair and plops down)

Wife: Did you get them gone?

Innkeeper: Yes, Good thing--they were ripe!! Fan some blankets around to get rid of that odor!

(Wife fans blanket for a bit)

Wife: I really like the young couple. They are so very nice and humble. Wish they lived around here. I think she and I could become friends.

Innkeeper: Friends are always asking for favors and not paying for them. We are better off to keep our distance and only cater to paying customers.

Wife: There is more to life than money, you know. Doing a good deed now and then wouldn't hurt you!

Innkeeper: Good deeds don't pay for a new roof! Or you a new dress, now does it? Money is the language the world speaks and you would be better off remembering that!! Money makes the world go around!

Wife: What will happen to all that money when you die? Are you going to take it with you?

Innkeeper: You'll have all of it spent before I die, don't you worry! Now, get back to work!

(Wife hurries off to see about the other guests and Innkeeper goes back to his nap.
3 wise men come down the aisle now. They stroll, talking as they make their way)

#1 Wise man: Man, I am glad to be outta Jerusalem. I thought for sure Herod was gonna throw us in jail! He was so insistent about knowing where the Christ Child was to be born!

#2 Wiseman: We were home free until he called us back to speak with him privately. That's when I got scared! We have been searching for this star for years and Herod thought we were just gonna tell him everything we knew— Well, he had another thing coming!

#3 Wiseman: We told Herod what the prophets had written—And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. How much plainer could we make it?

#1 Wiseman: We told King Herod we had seen the star of the King of the Jews and were on our way to worship Him. I guess Herod was afraid a new King was coming and would take down the kingdom and he'd lose all the power.

#2 Wiseman: Power hungry!! Some men are money hungry and some are power hungry! I just don't understand it.

#3 Wiseman: You have always been provided for thru the university and never wanted for much. When you get down to your last denarii, you can get pretty desperate! I wasn't raised up rich and we went to bed hungry some nights. Then, when I became a teacher at the university, things changed and now I try to help out my poor parents. It changes a man's attitude when his belly hungers for food.

#1 Wiseman: Anyway, I don't know about going back to Herod. He gives me the creeps.

#2 Wiseman: He claimed he wanted to worship the baby. Do you believe that?

#3 Wiseman: Not a chance. I was afraid he was gonna kill us and I know he would kill the Christ child if he could. I am not going back that way—surely we can find another way back and not have to go thru Jerusalem.

#2 Wiseman: We'll ask around and see about going a different way home.

(By now, they have made their way to the baby)

#1 Wiseman: We have seen the Babe's star and have followed it for a long ways! We have come to worship this Child—the Christ!

#2 Wiseman: You see, we have studied and searched the skies for years waiting for this time when the Savior would come to earth. I thank God I have lived to see it!!

#3 Wiseman: Here are some gifts we have brought to you for the Child. (He hands over a box to Mary) Gold—for He is more precious than all the gold in the world.

#2 Wiseman: (Hands Mary another Box) Here is Frankincense. A glittering, bitter herb for the purpose of sacrifice. This Child will be the Sacrifice for all mankind.

#1 Wiseman: (Hands Mary yet another box) Myrrh—The oil of holy ointment. Used for purification and embalming. He will be pure of heart, yet your heart will be broken at His obedience to the Father. We bestow these gifts to you as well as our blessings on the Child.

(The wisemen bow and worship Jesus)

(Mary accepts the gifts. Joseph thanks them. The Innkeeper wakes up again as the wife comes in from her chores)

Innkeeper: I hear more voices out in the stable. That is a busy place tonight—better not be those shepherds again! I hate shepherds!!

Wife: Maybe it is someone in need of a room!!

Innkeeper: I'll go and see. (He heads out to the stable again. He meets the wisemen coming out of the stable) Please kind sirs, tarry a little! Don't be in such a rush! Are you in need of a room? Food? (He clearly has "money" on the brain, as these men are dressed richly) Can I do anything for you?

#1 Wiseman: No, sir, I think we are well taken care of for a while. We must be about our way.

#2 Wiseman: Do you know how to get to the University, but NOT by way of Jerusalem?

Innkeeper: Yes, head east for 2 days and you'll be there!! But, first, please let me find you a nice soft bed for the night! No need to rush!! How about some food?

#3 Wiseman: We must be on our way! Our quest is finished here! We have followed the star and see the Savior!!

Innkeeper: What Savior?

#1 Wiseman: You have such a special guest and are not aware of it? In this stable is born the Savior of the world!! The Christ whom all Jews have waited hundreds of years to see and now He is come!! You are most honored among innkeepers to have provided a place for His birth!!

We salute you, kind innkeeper, for your humble service to our Savior!! (They bow to the Innkeeper, who is perplexed at all this.)

Innkeeper: Well. . . Yes. . . I guess so. . . Are you sure you won't stay?

#3 Wiseman: We must be on our way!! (They depart and the Innkeeper goes in to his wife.)

Innkeeper: Woman, there were 3 richly dressed men in the stable and they said that baby was the Christ, the Savior of the world.

Wife: Do you really think so?? Oh My!! What an honor! Could it really be??? Has our little inn been blessed with the birth of the Messiah??? Why did we put them in the stable? We should have let them have our room!! I need to take out more blankets!

Innkeeper: Wait, what are you talking about? Who is this King?

Wife: He is the Wonderful Counselor spoken of in Isaiah! The One who will save us from all our sins! All Jews have waited for this day for hundreds of years!! And to think He was born in our stable!!

Innkeeper: Maybe I should have charged them more.

Wife: There you go again! Thinking of money!! This is a great honor for all Jews and you can only think of money!! Money won't buy you eternal life!! You can't buy your way into Heaven!!

Innkeeper: Tomorrow is the Sabbath. Maybe I'll go down to the synagogue with you.

Wife: (Clearly awestruck at this suggestion) Yes!! That would be wonderful!! After chores, I'll get your clothes out and we can go down and hear the teaching. This is such a blessing for you to go with me after all these years when I have gone alone!!

Innkeeper: Don't get your hopes up—I just want to hear more about this Christ!

Wife: Yes!! I want YOU to hear more of Him!!