

A Christmas Eve Meditation

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- Isaiah 9:2, 6 New Revised Standard Version

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness –
on them light has shined....

⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Luke 2:1-20 Good News Translation At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ²When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. ³Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own hometown. ⁴Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. ⁵He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, ⁶and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. ⁷She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn. ⁸There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, ¹⁰but the angel said to them, “Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. ¹¹This very day in David's town your Savior was born – Christ the Lord! ¹²And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!” ¹⁵When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us.” ¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. ¹⁸All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. ¹⁹Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. ²⁰The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.

On this night long ago Mary and Joseph were not where they wanted to be: “at home.”

Ironically, you are at home, but you're not where you want to be right now: sitting in church, surrounded by friends and family and

strangers, amid the cozy swirl of carols and candlelight and kisses and hugs and handshakes of Christmas greetings.

Perhaps more than any other Christmas in your life, tonight might, indeed, be a “Silent Night.”

But... can you see the blessing to be found in this “Silent Night?”

In the beloved carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem” there is a line that whispers this truth: *“How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given....”*

Mary and Joseph welcomed the birth of their baby in the stillness of a stable. No fanfare. No adoring crowds, or relatives or friends. The gift of Jesus came to us quietly, calmly.

That’s what we can remember on Christmas this year: even in the relative quiet and stillness of our homes God seeks to enter our lives and fill our hearts with divine, abundant, unstoppable love – love embodied in the baby Jesus, asleep on the hay on this “Silent Night, Holy Night.”