

December 21, 2020

[Luke 2:1-20](#)

Oh, the beauty and glory of Christmas.

Oh, the stress and mess of it, too.

I love all things Christmas: the family gatherings, the gift exchanges, reflecting on Jesus' miraculous birth. Unfortunately, those very things also expose the messiness of my heart.

But isn't that the message of Christmas?

Israel's long-awaited Messiah was coming at last... through the virgin Mary! *Glory!*

But did her community believe the father was God? Or was she misunderstood and accused of immorality? *Messy.*

In Bethlehem, there was no room for them in the "inn." Theoretically, Mary and Joseph could have been turned away from Joseph's family members. *Complicated.*

Angels appeared to shepherds in a field announcing, "Good news of great joy! A Savior is Born!" *Glory!*

Yet he was placed in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. *Messy.*

The shepherds, however, would have seen the *glory in the mess*. The manger was "a sign to them." They knew the drill. When baby lambs were born, shepherds would "wrap them in swaddling cloths and place them in a manger" to keep them from becoming defective so that they would be perfect sacrifices for priests.

This was their glorious sign, in the middle of the muck and mire: the perfect sacrificial lamb, Jesus--the "lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), was born in the same way--set apart for sacrifice--that one day, he would die as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and to end the sacrificial system once and for all. *Glory!*

God displays his glory in the mess!

He is always working--even when things are complicated, messy and inconvenient. That is the promise of the manger, and that is the promise of Christmas.

As you prepare for today, how can Jesus' messy but glorious birth be "a sign to you?"

Lord, I confess I sometimes do not receive your birth as good news of great joy. My mind is flooded with thoughts of family dynamics, toy assembly, shipping delays, and a never-ending to-do list. Thank you that you came for messes like me. Thank you for entering my mess in the most glorious of ways. I ask for the joy of the angels, the pondering of Mary, and the haste of the shepherds to share this good news of great joy.

Lindsay Fluker