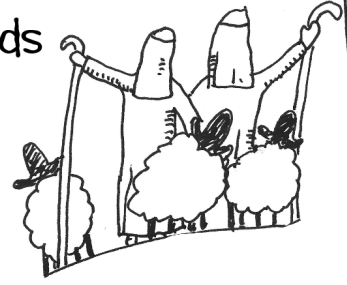


Moment of Wonder - Shepherds

By Major Ann Montgomery

(Luke 2:8-20 NIV)



Do you like to be surprised?

I guess for all of us the answer would depend upon what the surprise is! If it's something that brings a smile to our faces and fills our hearts with joy and happiness then, yes, we'd probably all welcome that surprise wouldn't we?

But what of the Shepherds?

We read in Luke's gospel, of the moment when God, through the angel, appeared to the shepherds - all was quiet, all was still and then suddenly an angel appeared and then we're told even more appeared, 'a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel...' and furthermore 'the glory of the Lord shone around them.' This glory, heavenly brightness encircling them, shining around them was the manifestation of God's presence and power, it was the Shekinah glory of God; God was actually right there on the hillside with them.

What a surprise that must have been. They must have wondered what on earth was happening!

They might have been expecting a cold night, they might even have been expecting to keep some predators away from their flocks, but they certainly would not have been expecting that! God chose to be with these humble men, undertaking a fairly mundane task over and above everyone else, and furthermore, He invited them to celebrate the birth of the Saviour and permitted them to be the first to go and worship Him in the manger.

I wonder, as they fell at his feet, did these shepherd's understand the significance that the One of whose birth they were told would also be known as the 'Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world' (John 1:29)

God also invites us - humble, ordinary people - to accept the Saviour of the world for ourselves too doesn't he?

He longs for us to see His glory, to know His presence with us.

Have you seen the glory of the Lord, perhaps in the ordinary, everyday, mundane experiences of life - in the smile of a friend, through a ray of the sun, a wave crashing on the beach or a new shoot peering through the ground, a snowflake falling down?

Does it make you want to fall down and worship Him?

May God surprise us all this advent, may we like the shepherds experience moments of wonder when we sense His presence in a new way. May we be aware of the glory of the Lord.

I have seen the glory of the Lord, and in his presence, my heart is stirred.

God eternal in this time draws near, the King of Heaven is here.

I have seen the glory of the Lord, my soul was lifted, my hope restored.

God eternal in his time draws near, the King of Heaven is here.

(Chris Brindley)