

Luke 2:8-12 - Now there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

These familiar words have graced countless Christmas cards and even provided the text for a soprano aria in Handel's *Messiah*. Yet repetition has not diminished the awe and wonder inherent in the angel's proclamation of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. With the birth of Jesus came the Hope of our salvation that was secured when He died and rose from the grave. With the gift of His promised Holy Spirit, we have received the mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Consider this scripture in light of the knowledge that Jesus has chosen to make His earthly dwelling place in every believer. Baby Jesus, born in a stable and laid in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn, has now found His resting place in a dwelling called by your name.

Let's consider the inn a metaphor for the world; the stable might represent the church; the manger, you and me. Think about this. In our present-day world, there is no room for Jesus at the inn. He has been despised and rejected of men, marginalized and made redundant in a politically-correct world.

But the stable, representing the church, received Him and gave Him shelter, a place to be protected from the savagery of the world. Mary and Joseph laid their newborn son, the Son of God, in a manger - a feeding trough. What an apt metaphor, that the Bread of Life would be placed in a primitive structure intended to feed animals.

And now, through the miracle of the Resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Son of God, the Bread of Life, has been placed in you and in me. I guess that makes us breadboxes, if not feeding troughs. You and I are the mangers of the Lord, those places where others can be nurtured and fed through us by the One who lives within us.

How incomprehensible to think that Jesus, the Bread of Life, is also the Lord who heals us and has taken up permanent residence inside our earthly tabernacles. Today, will you prepare Him room? Empty the manger of your soul of all those things of the past that are hindering Jesus from

living fully in you. Exchange the soiled, smelly straw of your past for His clean robes of righteousness. Let Jesus rest His head in your manger bed.