

**‘Thanks Be To God For His Indescribable Gift.’**

This sounds a lot like an urban myth, but my brother tells me that this happened to the wife of someone he works with. I must admit that I'm a bit sceptical, but it's certainly good for a chuckle. **It seems that this lady didn't quite make it to the hospital for the birth of her child. In fact, the baby was born on the lawn just outside the main entrance. The poor woman was dreadfully embarrassed and was being consoled by one of the nurses, who said; ‘Don't worry about it. It could have been worse. Why, two years ago we had a woman who gave birth in the elevator.’** The woman cried out, **‘That was me!’** and burst into tears.

The birth of a baby is an amazing event; it is nothing short of a miracle as God brings a human being into this world. Indeed, there is nothing like it, the birth of a baby is also a special time for the parents. After waiting some 9 months, a little child is placed into their arms and they experience both fear and excitement. The time to be a parent has finally arrived.

Just over 2000 years ago, a baby was born to a young couple in the town of Bethlehem, his name was Jesus. But this was different, He was really God's son and the task of rearing Him belonged to a young man and lady named Joseph and Mary.

**Now, can you imagine the fear and excitement they must have felt as they were asked to be the earthly parents of God's only child?** It was certainly a special time as they welcomed into their life a miracle called Jesus. **Are there some experiences in your life, which you will never forget? Experiences, perhaps, that changed your life or at least made a profound impact upon it?**

Maybe it was sudden illness or a death in the family or the loss of a job which had a major impact in your lives. But for those of you, who are parents, will also know that the birth of a child can have a profound impact in your life. You've got the stress of hoping that there will be no complications during the birth. The stress of hoping that the baby will be fit and healthy. You may even have the stress of caring for the child when they come into the world.

I remember when Roxanne and Josh were born I turned all sorts of colours. It was amazing as they were covered in blood and all sorts of horrible looking stuff, and they looked like something out of the film **‘alien’** that came into the world.

And perhaps some of the feelings I had on that occasion were similar to those felt by a man named Joseph as he witnessed the birth of the son of God. We read that story in the gospel of **Luke 2:1-7** **‘In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.’**

You see during this time, Rome was the ruling power throughout the land; and some powerful events were taking place. It was a great time for the Roman Empire and people respected the Roman authorities. Now even though this was an important census taking place, something even more significant was about to happen and that was the coming of God into this world.

But it would not happen in the city of Rome but rather in a little nowhere village some four miles outside of the city of Jerusalem; in a little town called Bethlehem with parents almost too poor to make the journey. This 13 or 14 year old girl, called Mary along with the man whom she would soon marry, Joseph the carpenter, made the 90 mile trip from Nazareth down to Bethlehem.

**Can you just imagine the anxiety and the difficulty of Mary making that trip?** Some 9 months pregnant, riding on the top of a donkey until she could no longer ride and then getting off and walking until she could no longer walk. No doubt anticipating the time when she would arrive in Bethlehem and be able to rest and wait for the arrival of her first child.

Luke tells us that while they were in the city of Bethlehem, the baby was born. Yet there was no room for them in the inn and in those days it was literally a guest house or a guest room in the home of one of Joseph's friends.

No doubt, this was a very stressful and anxiety filled occasion as there were too many people in one place, as everyone had come together to be counted. And so Mary and Joseph ended up in a stable at the back of, or underneath, the house; in something similar to what we might call, today, a barn.

And there Jesus was born; it was there that God entered the world as a little baby and his bed was an animal's feeding trough, or a manger. And like all newborns, he was wrapped in strips of cloth to keep his body straight and to ensure proper growth. That's the simple story of Jesus being born in the city of Bethlehem, but oh, what a stress and anxiety filled occasion that must have been. A poor, young teenage girl giving birth to her first born son in nothing more than a horse barn, with only the basic supplies available.

We continue on now with the reading of this story as we pick up in **Luke 2:8-14**. **‘And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, **‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests.’**

In **verse 8** the scene changes, it goes from the anxiety of a birth to the announcement of a baby. Here we are introduced to a group of shepherds, living out in the fields watching their own, or possibly somebody else's sheep, late into the night. But they were watching sheep that probably would be used in Temple sacrifices, to take away the sin of the people.

How appropriate it is that these shepherds would be the first ones to see the new baby. Jesus will not be a Roman emperor, but He will become the Lamb of God. He will be the one who will not take away individual sin but rather will take away the sin of the entire world. But not in those temple sacrifices, but rather in the sacrifice that He will make as He gives His life upon the cross.

No, Jesus was not born into a royal family loved ones, but into a family that was poor and lowly. His coming into this world was just as common as another baby, being born to another poor couple. A couple who had no bed to offer, but only a feeding trough, a manger, as a place for him to sleep. And then from heaven came the announcement, came the good news of joy and peace, the birth of Jesus.

The angels announce a summary of his role in this world and said, **‘He is from the house of David; He will be the Saviour; the Christ; the Lord.’** And if you get a moment to read through the Book of Acts you will see that, that same message was preached through the entire book. It was preached by the apostle Paul and it is included in most of his letters; it is the very same message proclaimed by preachers all around the world today.

And notice in our story, the heavenly host began to sing about this newborn child. And for those of you who attend a **‘church’** regularly or even just at Christmas time, you might sing a song that we all know, **don’t we? ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.’**

Oh, what an announcement, and then this new baby, Jesus, will call upon people to live at peace and to be kind to one another. He will bring a great light to those living in darkness and in the shadow of death. He will make straight the crooked paths and become a stream of living water to those who are spiritually thirsty.

Yet, at the same time, he will call upon people everywhere to repent. He will ask his followers to become his disciples. He will demand new attitudes and new behaviours from those who belong to him. Then the prophecy of **Isaiah 61** will be fulfilled as the poor will have good news preached to them. Prisoners will be freed, the blind will see, the oppressed will have relief. Oh, what an announcement! Jesus Christ is born and he will bring peace, and hope, and salvation to this world. There is no greater announcement that could have been made.

Again, when you think about it after all that stress and anxiety whenever a child is born into your family, you can’t wait to tell people. You take the child home and put them in their own bed and you so excited you invite people over to see the new-born child and you get so much encouragement in knowing that people care enough to come and visit the child. You want people to come and see the child, you want them to hold them and rejoice with you.

Oh, it is something very special and we are excited to announce it to the world. We want to tell the story to anyone who will listen. We want to show the pictures to anyone who will look. Yes, we welcome and we are excited about the birth of our children, or our grandchildren, into this world.

Well, the shepherds are excited as well and they play a significant role in this story as they announce to the world the arrival of the Savior, Jesus the Christ. We continue now with the story of Jesus' birth as we read in [Luke 2:15-20](#). **‘When the angels had left them and gone 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 about.’ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.’**

These shepherds decide to go to the city of Bethlehem and to see for themselves this newborn child. And so this group of shepherds, the ones who had heard the song of the angels and had seen the glory of the Lord, leave the fields and the sheep they are attending and they go to see the baby. They gather around Mary and Joseph and they begin to tell them about their special child, about the things they had witnessed in the fields, the things they had seen and heard.

Mary and Joseph, busy with the chores of childbirth under the most difficult of circumstances, do not experience heavens visit themselves, but they hear of it from the shepherds. These shepherds no doubt tell everything they had witnessed out there in the fields. They are excited to see the baby Jesus; perhaps they are even as excited as these new proud parents.

But then from there we notice the news spreads everywhere. It is not a secret any longer. It is time to let everyone know about Jesus’ arrival into this world; and they are the ones to make that announcement. Then it seems something else happens in this story as the scene now shifts to young Mary. Mary responds to the announcement of Jesus' birth into this world with amazement.

Perhaps she states the words that the apostle Paul would later write in [2 Corinthians 9:15](#) **‘Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!’** No doubt Mary is excited about the birth of her son, God's son, Jesus the Christ. Mary treasures in her heart all of the things she hears from the shepherds. She thinks carefully about everything that has taken place over the last few months.

Perhaps she remembers the angel, Gabriel, telling her that she had found favour with God and that God had chosen her out of all of the women on the face of the earth to bring His son into this world. No doubt she remembers the anxiety of that trip from Nazareth down to Bethlehem and the pain of the childbirth, and yet how quickly it went away as she experienced the joy of a newborn baby.

Yes, Mary treasures in her heart this special event, the birth of her child, the child of God and surely she shakes her head in amazement at what God has just done. She, along with Joseph, and the shepherds in the field, the angels in heaven no doubt humbly bow in awe and wonder.

And again just think about it, when a child is born, after all the anxiety and stress of the birth, after all the excitement and joy of announcing this great event with friends and family. You begin to get excited about all the things you are going to share together. You get excited about all the things you do together, the games you can play, the places you can go. You know all the things which can bond a child to their parents.

And again every now and then you stop and shake your head in awe and amazement at what God has just done in bringing this child into the world. And its times like that, that you could never imagine that all that stress and anxiety could turn into something so wonderful and exciting. And when I thought about this I thought to myself if God can do that for me then you need to know that God can do that for you.

I reflect back to the Old Testament; how that God brought Isaac into the world when his parents were well beyond those childbearing years. And how He gave a child to a woman named Hannah when she earnestly prayed for one, and yet she was unable to bear children. **But yet, isn't that the way God is? Isn't that the way that God works in His world still today?**

He works good things out of the bad, He changes the difficult into the exciting and He transforms the anxiety into amazement. I don't know where you are in your spiritual life today. Perhaps you are going through some anxiety or some stress in your life. Perhaps you are searching for a new direction to take or maybe you are dealing with some sin that keeps you from drawing close to God. Or maybe there are some issues that are very difficult, and problems that don't have any solutions.

I don't have to tell you; the world is full of difficulties and struggles and many of those things get us down and cause greater amounts of discomfort and pain, and even prevent us from becoming the kind of person that God wants us to be. Oh, there is no guarantee that things on this earth, as we know it, will be okay. We do not have the promise that life will be free from all of the trials and temptations that Satan presents to us.

In fact I don't know of anybody who has a completely stress or anxiety free life. It just doesn't happen. But the good news is God sees what is going on in His world. He knows the pain, and the struggles, and the problems. He is well aware of the stress and the anxiety we experience almost every single day and the good news is He is able to do something about it.

Yes, God gives us the victory through his son Jesus Christ and in Him, as we read in **Romans 8:31** and following, **'we are more than conquerors. And there is nothing in all of this world and all of this creation that is able to separate us from the love of God that is found in Christ Jesus our Lord.'** Yes, God is in the business of working good things out of bad. He gives solutions to our problems and He offers hope in the midst of despair. He takes our anxiety filled moments and turns them into amazement filled events.

Our best response is to do perhaps what Mary did, to stand in awe and amazement of who God is and what God does. Oh, from time to time people reflect on the events surrounding the birth of their child. And they may think about the anxiety of his first few hours in the hospital. You may think about how excited you were to take them home, to put them in their own bed, and to announce to everyone that your child has been born.

And even now, when I think of our kids, I still stand in amazement of what God continues to do, not only in my life but in the life of our children. But once again, **aren't those the ways of God?** He does wonderful and amazing things, not only with our children, and with His son Jesus, but in the many and various ways throughout our lives and in the lives of our precious loved ones. Yes, He turns anxiety filled moments into amazement filled events. And when that happens our natural response is to offer to Him our worship. Our natural response should be to call upon the name of God and tell Him of our gratitude, to lift up His Name and to sing praises to the One who does so much for us.

We know the rest of the story; the baby Jesus did not remain a child forever. He grew up. In fact we read later in **Luke 2:52** **'that Jesus grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man'**. And we also know that He fulfilled the purpose for which He came to this earth. **Matthew 20:28** **'He came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many'**.

Oh, He blessed all those who came to Him. He fed the hungry, He healed the sick, He even raised people from the dead and yet many people rejected him. Many people did not believe that He was the son of God; and they crucified Jesus, the son of God, the child of Mary. But then, after He was crucified he was taken down. His body was put into a tomb; but yet the tomb, the grave, could not hold him any longer and on the third day he rose from the dead, defeating sin, death, and Satan. Now he is reigning at the right hand of God.

Through our belief in Him as Jesus the Christ the one and only son of God, we can receive the wonderful spiritual salvation which He purchased for us on that cross. Because we receive His free gift of salvation we can know today that even if we do experience all kinds of anxiety, all kinds of problems, all kinds of difficulties throughout our life.

There is coming a day when we will stand in amazement at the eternal life, which He has prepared for us. An eternal life that we will someday inherit that will be free from all of the pain, and anxiety, and problems that we experience in this world today. My prayer and encouragement is for you to put your faith and trust in this Jesus, the son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. And I pray that you recognise what God can do in your life through His son Jesus as He turns those anxiety filled moments into amazement filled events. Yes, my prayer is that you will put your trust in Jesus, and receive His salvation, and look forward to spending an eternity with him. And if the gift of eternal life is more appealing to you than a **play station 3** then please just ask someone today about how we can help you receive that gift.