A Heart Prepared

Day Five – Mary gives birth in Bethlehem.

Ninety miles by car is not very far. Depending on road conditions, driving on the interstate in Idaho will take just over an hour to reach your destination. But covering that distance on foot or on a donkey in Joseph and Mary's time would take several days. Add Mary's late-stage pregnancy, and we can imagine how uncomfortable and arduous the journey would have been. All this seemingly took place because it was time for the official Roman census. But we know it fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Micah 5:2 about the birth of the Lord over Israel.

From Micah 5:2 (ESV), we read: But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. The story of the Savior's birth, as told in Luke 2:1-7, gives us evidence of the journey to Bethlehem and describes the humble conditions of His birthplace. With no room at the inn, Joseph and Mary had to find shelter in a manger. Many theologians think this was a cave where animals were stabled. No one at the inn was willing to give up their comfortable lodging to allow a very pregnant Mary to have a warm, clean place to give birth. So, Joseph and Mary soldiered on and found a place for Jesus's impending birth.

Let's put ourselves in the place of the inn's occupants in Bethlehem on that December evening. Would we give up our comfortable lodging to allow a random pregnant couple to have a clean, comfortable place to give birth? I would like all of us to reflect on this for a bit. We live more comfortable lives than many citizens of other countries. Have we become too comfortable to give up our hotel room so someone else can have the comfort we enjoy? I am reminded of Jesus' words from The Final Judgment, captured in Matthew 25:31-46. The convicting words from Matthew 25:44-45 (ESV) make me think about how I would choose to act. "Then they also will answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?" Then he will answer them, saying, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

While we rejoice over the birth of the Savior, we should also remember that the conditions He was born under resulted from someone's unwillingness to give up their comfortable circumstances. We can learn from this and choose to do better.

Leaning on Jesus
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