

LOVED, LIFTED AND LOUSED

Matthew 1:23, 2:1-6, 13-15

Matthew 1:23 (Isa 7:14) *“Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.”*

This will never get old. This story of God coming down. No, more than that! God becoming one of us. That God would become flesh, travel down a birth canal of a young woman and peer out into the world through the eyes of a new born baby. Incredible! I should know by now that stables, small towns, and simple people are the avenues of God. I would think differently, if I were producing this thing. I would want all the big boys in religious circles to appear on the “world news” programs to announce this event. Probably in New York. That would make sense to me. The Messiah would come perhaps in a comet of fire, a big one. He would be dressed in the most dignified garments of Heads of State, or at least in the flowing robes and bright collars of those clergy in those towering pulpits. (Can I get one of those? Kidding). Swaddling clothes? Give me a break. Conceived in the womb of a young girl? Come on. Announced into the sleep of some carpenter? Can you imagine shepherds, shepherds I said, telling folks “The Messiah has arrived, He’s in Bethlehem, in this hay holder?” Yeah right. Let’s see now, *Immanuel*, God with us, in the least important city of Judea, in a cow barn, in a manger. This is not very good press. This will not be a Hollywood production. It is in fact a Holy Wonder.

Matthew 2:6 (Micah 5:2) *The Hebrew is literally, “But thou Bethlehem Ephrata, too small to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall come forth one who is to be the ruler of Israel.”*

The leaders, really big leaders of thousands of people lived in the area of Ephrathah, but Bethlehem was insignificant. Bethlehem, you are too small to really be anything of importance. Maybe Pine County is like that. In fact, maybe your life feels like that. Can God use me? Can anything lasting come out of my life? I seem so small compared to all else around me. Small towns, stables, mangers, swaddling clothes. Makes you wonder doesn’t it? What will God think of next?

Matthew 2:15 (Hosea 11:1) *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.”*

This passage in Hosea refers to a nation. A people of God. Egypt was bondage in their life. It was the place they had lived so long as slaves. Even in their worst hour, God had not forgotten them. They were so enslaved they had pretty much accepted it. There were no revolutions, no uprisings. They were used to it. Freedom would be nice but it just wasn’t likely. It isn’t as if God wasn’t involved from the beginning. He had placed a deliverer in the palace...and it would burn in that one’s heart, to be loose from bondage. One man, burning with the passion of God. That was the history of this passage. Then , after 400 years or more of silence and spiritual darkness, God sends His Son INTO AND OUT OF EGYPT. Jesus went into and out of the place of “bondage” of the past. Have you ever looked at the people of God and wondered, what could they be if they were loosed from the past? What about your life? There are a lot of different types of bondage. The worst is complacency. God loves you, and calls you out of wandering and into worship. Celebrate the King. He has announced Himself to you. Shepherds, a carpenter, stables, swaddling clothes, hay holders, AND ME and YOU. I have a hope and a future, because of Christmas.

You have a hope and a future, because of Christmas.

With deep love for you all,

Sam Burch, (His shepherd boy)