

Current Thoughts

from Dwight's corner

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We know the Christmas season is upon us when the ageless Charlie Brown characters speak to us from the television. Anyone who has grown up in church can identify with the children's pageant and the well-rehearsed speech by Linus: *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.* (Luke 2:8)

The story of stories is about to enter a new chapter. It is recited by stuttering children wrapped in bathrobes, repeating words they don't entirely understand. But the happening demands our attention. This singular event is one chapter in a story is filled with audacious claims. We can dismiss it as a nice, but harmless play for children; attack it as a dangerous lie; or enter the story ourselves.

This is not a story we "own." It is not a story we are free to edit. We cannot remake characters to our liking or improve upon the dialog. We cannot unilaterally change the beginning or the ending. This is God's story. It is first and foremost about God—not us.

While the story is about God, human characters (good, bad, and ugly) seem to have the most readily visible parts. Apparently it is impossible for God's story to be told without including us, warts and all. God's affection for us keeps God close by—sometimes weeping, sometimes cheering, sometimes whispering, and sometimes correcting.

In this chapter of the story, God is coming incredibly close. An angel announces God's humble stage entry to smelly shepherds: *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.* (Luke 2:11)

But the angel's words are more than an announcement. They are an invitation—God has come for you, and you can see this unprecedented event if you will look for it. In effect, the shepherds were invited to enter God's story.

The coming of Christ—the Incarnation—is a story that has generated songs, poems, and books. Theologies, both good and bad, must deal with the Incarnation and its implications. From the very beginning there has been debate and rejection. Herod had no clue as to the identity of this baby or a single thought about Incarnation, but was driven to violently eliminate the threat to his own story.

Therein lies the rub. We want the absolute freedom to write our own storyline. In our Eden-born arrogance, we want to define for ourselves who we are and what we will do. But in Jesus Christ, God is inviting us to stop trying to write our own isolated story and become part of the Divine story with eternal consequences.

The shepherds went to see and their story changed.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. (Luke 2:20)



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