

The Beginning

Christmas has come and gone but will we remember “the reason for the season.” It’s not the gifts under the tree, or the ornaments from long ago, or the ham or standing rib roast. It’s a small baby born in a stable and laid in a manger. We have reached the end of the journey but have we? We have seen Mary blessed with her mission, She and Joseph went to Bethlehem then the flight to Egypt, the three Wise Men and their journey. Now comes Lent and then Easter and we learn the true meaning of the birth of a baby. That little babe born in a stable didn’t just come so we would know Christ, he came to save us from ourselves. To save us from our sins, from every wrong we ever contemplated. He came offering with his death on a cross, our forgiveness. “I come that you may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10). What do we have to do in return but turn from our sins and seek forgiveness. Christ will do the rest even to the final sacrifice, his death on earth on a cross. When we were in Israel, we followed the route that Mary and Joseph would have taken to Egypt. They walked while carrying a small baby, we rode in an air-conditioned bus. It was hard to imagine that trek through desert with no roads and on foot. They stayed in Egypt until it felt safe to return home and resume his journey to the cross. But the cross was not the end of the journey. Like his birth it was another beginning. The beginning of the risen Christ. The beginning of the true mission, the beginning of another miracle. We had been to the tomb, to the hill, to the narrow streets of Jerusalem, and seen the small sign, “Ecce Homo.” Behold the man, the words of Pontius Pilate when he presented Jesus Christ to the crowd. We had been to the Mount where 5000 were fed, to Bethlehem, to the Jordan River where our baptism vows were renewed, to the Dead Sea, to the cave where Peter’s mission was told to him. We had been on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, we had looked across the Kidron Valley from the Mount of olives to see the walled city of Jerusalem. We related the miracles of the life of Christ and it all began with the birth of a baby. The virgin birth. The first miracle.

And Mary wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger for there was no room for them at the Inn. Luke 2:12

Lord, we thank you for the miracle of the birth of Jesus, for his life on earth, and for his love revealed even on a cross. Be with us that we may be worthy of the gift of Jesus brought to us as a little baby. Be with our church Lord, may we serve all your people always Lord in your name. May we use the gifts you have given us to serve others Be with our Pastor, bless his service, and protect him. Be with his family. Be with our staff and leaders, give them safety and inspiration and strength for their tasks. Be with the poor and hungry and help us to serve them in your name. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen

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