

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Nathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss

Issue 16

December 2010

With NaNoWriMo over and me feeling a little burnt out, I turned in a different direction this month. As I was getting ready to send out Christmas cards I thought about writing a Christmas story. The obvious things came to mind; the Christmas story from the point of view of one of the mice in the stable where Jesus was born - that would be for Emma - or Joseph's story - he must of had a hard time with the whole thing. I finally settled on the Shepherd's story.

The following story is historical fiction - no one knows what the shepherds said when the angles came. My characterization of the shepherds comes from the history I've heard about their lives and their place in society. I hope you all enjoy this story and allow yourselves to be open to the miracle of the coming of the king as you share this holiday season with your friends and family.

If you think others would enjoy this story, please forward it to them and share the good news with them.

To sign up for the newsletter, which I greatly appreciate, go to <http://DouglasGClarke.com/lists/>

Douglas G. Clarke

A Shepherd's Story

Last night is a night I'll never forget. It started out like ever other winter night - cold and a little windy - the wind always seems to pick up when the sun goes down. Well anyway, I had finished eating my dinner and herding all the sheep into the little box canyon where I keep them at night. I left my dog there to watch them and went over to Joshua's fire - he always has something warm to drink.

Samuel and Joseph joined us. As we sat and talked we started to play dice. It's what we do every night - there's not much else to if you're outside of town - not that there is a lot to do inside of town either. We were playing for stones - which I know is kind of silly since the ground is covered with them, but you've got to play for something.

We had played for an hour or so when another shepherd walked out of the darkness into the light of the fire. We were

all a little startled because we hadn't heard him approaching and none of our dogs had barked. He looked nice enough - maybe a bit on the old side to be a shepherd, you know - twenty-five or thirty. We all looked at each other to see if anyone recognized him - none of us did.

"Would you mind if I shared your fire?" he asked, "I have traveled far."

We all shrugged at each other, then I said, "Please do. We are just trying to stay warm ourselves." The man sat with us and warmed his hands by the fire.

"My name is Gabriel. May I join your game as well?"

I shrugged again. "We are just playing for stones." I handed him the dice.

"Thank you. I just happen to have a pocket full of stones." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a hand full of stones.

We played dice for the next

hour or so, and Gabriel didn't play very well. When he lost his last stone he stood up. I'm not sure why, but as he stood up I noticed that the stones he had been playing with, which were now in our piles seemed to be sparkling. I picked one up and realized that we had nuggets of silver. I looked up at Gabriel and it seemed that the sky was shining behind him.

I quickly grab all of the shiny nuggets from my pile and held them out to Gabriel. "I'm sorry. We were just playing for stones and you have lost your fortune. It is not right for you to loose so much when we were risking nothing. Gabriel just stood there - looking out to the horizon like he was expecting to see something. The whole night sky was getting brighter.

I must not have been the only one to be terrified; the other three boys grabbed the silver nuggets from their piles and held them up to Gabriel.

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We all sat there wondering what we should do, then Gabriel finally looked back down at us. "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: You will find a babe wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger."

We were all about to ask him questions when the night sky turned as bright as day. Up in the sky there were hundreds of lights shining. As we watched the lights grew larger and then we heard a rumbling. The lights grew larger and the rumbling grew louder. Then all at once we could tell that the lights were angles and the rumbling turned into singing. Gabriel rose into the sky and we could see that he was an angle, too.

Gabriel and the heavenly hosts began to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." We fell to our faces, afraid to look upon their glory. The singing went on for what felt like forever. When it finally faded I chanced a glance to see if they had gone. They had, all but Gabriel.

"Go now," he said, "the King awaits you."

"But who are we to see a king? We are but lowly shepherds," I replied.

"You are the first called to see the king. He came for the likes of you."

"But we have no gifts to give a king," I said.

"He seeks only your hearts."

"But our hearts are not pure. This very night we have been throwing the dice."

"He has come to call hearts like these."

"But," I started, but Gabriel interrupted me.

"Look at what you hold in your hands. Is this not a fitting gift for a King?"

I looked down at my hands and saw the silver nuggets there. "But," I stopped when I looked up and saw that he was gone.

We stood there for a while looking at each other. Finally Samuel broke the silence. "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the angel Gabriel told us about."

We didn't know what else to do, so we finally all agreed to go into town. We woke up our sheep and started for town. If we had just walked there it would have only taken twenty minutes, but trying to get a hundred sleepy sheep to town took a bit longer - like two hours longer.

When we finally got to town we went to a stable where we could pen our sheep. As we finished getting the last one in and getting the gate closed, we noticed a light coming from the stable. We crept quietly to the door to look in. We saw a man standing by a manger and a woman lying in the straw near it. We were about to leave when we heard a baby cooing. That's when we remembered what Gabriel had said, "You

will find a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger.

The four of us quietly entered the stable. The man standing by the manger turned to look at us. "What do you seek?" he asked us in a hushed tone.

We took a few steps closer and then we saw the babe just as Gabriel had said. I spoke up first. "We were told to come and greet the King. Is this he?"

The man looked at us and smiled. "That is what I have been told. It may be true. My name is Joseph."

My friend spoke up, "My name is Joseph, too. An angel told us that we were the first called to see the King."

Then Samuel spoke up, "We have brought gifts for the King." Then he walked up to the manger and knelt before it. He placed his handful of silver nuggets in a pile on the floor. Each in turn, we went and knelt before the babe and offered him our gifts.

When we had each finished, we didn't know what else to do, so we said goodbye and left as quietly as we had come. We gathered our sheep and made our way back out of town.

It is morning now. If I had been able to sleep I might think this was all a dream. But I couldn't sleep. Is this really the King we have all been waiting for? Has he come to redeem his children? Has he come to call a simple shepherd like me? I believe the answer is yes and I praise God that even someone as lowly as I could be called to worship the King.