

Bodmin Light and Life Nativity 2020

Based on "It begins in Bethlehem" by Bob Hartman

Published by The Bible Society 2020



A woman called Mary
Was doing her chores,
When an angel arrived,
But not through the doors.
He simply appeared
And she dropped to the floor.
'Hello, Mary', he said.
'GOD IS WITH YOU.'

'God is with me?'
She wondered.
'But what does that mean?
What is this all about?
Is it some kind of dream?'
The angel just smiled.
'Don't be scared.
Please don't scream.
God is happy with you
AND WILL BLESS YOU!'

You'll soon have a baby,'
The angel went on.
'A quite special baby
Called Jesus, God's Son.
The heir of King David,
He'll sit on his throne.
And his kingdom
WILL LAST FOR EVER.'

But how?' Mary asked.
'I don't understand.
I'm engaged to be wed
But he's not yet my man.'
'Trust God,' said the angel.
'He's got it all planned.
His Spirit will COME UPON YOU.'

'Joseph don't worry'
'Joseph don't weep'
'Lay down your head and go back to sleep'

All night, Joseph tossed.
All night, Joseph turned.
He just couldn't sleep.
He'd only just learned
That Mary was pregnant.
What's more, she'd confirmed

That the baby she bore was not his.

'Joseph don't worry'

'Joseph don't weep'

'Lay down your head and go back to sleep'

She'd told him this tale: an angelic visit,

A son to be born by God's Holy Spirit.

The more she went on, the less he believed it.

He wanted to break their engagement.

But just as sleep came, that angel appeared.

'Don't worry,' he said, 'there's nothing to fear.

I know that you're troubled, so you need to hear

That Mary is telling the truth.

'The baby she bears is God's holy son.

Call his name JESUS, for he is the one

God promised to send to save everyone.

Immanuel. God is with us.

'He's the answer to all that the prophets have said.

So keep your engagement. Be glad and be wed.'

And when Joseph woke up, that's just what he did.

He took Mary to be his wife.

Then Mary and Joseph, her husband, went down

To be counted by Caesar in Bethlehem town.

There were no empty rooms for the couple to stay

So they stopped in a place where the animals lay.

And there, in the hay, she gave birth to God's son

And cuddled and cradled her small special one.

Shepherds were lying on a hill.

The night was silent, all was still.

They watched their flock of grazing sheep,

And tried hard not to fall asleep.

When, bright and white, an angel came

To light the night, a fiery flame.

The shepherds trembled where they laid.

The angel said, 'Don't be afraid.'

'The news is good, the news I bring.

Good news to make you leap and sing.

Good news for people everywhere.

Good news of joy for all to share.

'Good news, for God has kept his word,

And sent his saviour, Christ the Lord.

The one he promised he would send

Is born this day in BETHLEHEM.

'And this will be a sign for you.

This is how you'll know it's true.
You'll find a baby wrapped in cloth,
Sleeping in a cattle trough.'

The angel, then, was joined by more,
Six and twelve and twenty-four,
And then too many more to number,
Heaven's choir, LOUD AS THUNDER.

And so the angels left that place,
Just like they'd come, without a trace,
Except for all they sang and said,
Which echoed in each shepherd's head.

'Let's go to Bethlehem and see,'
The shepherds all, as one, agreed.
They found the baby where he lay,
Asleep upon a bed of hay.
They told them what the angels said.
Then Mary smiled and raised her head.
A secret hid there, in her eyes,
For she was not one bit surprised.

So back they went to sheep and hill,
No longer silent, hardly still,
But singing loud like angels bright
Of all that they had seen that night.

The star-watchers watched the stars go by,
Looking for secrets in the sky.
And then they saw a special star,
Away in the west. Away off far.
'A king's been born!
That's what it means.
Judea way, or so it seems.'
The climbed aboard their camel-y beasts
And set off west from their homes back east.

At last their journey came to an end.
They parked their camels in Jerusalem.
Then they went to Herod, king of the nation,
To ask him for some information.
'Oh king,' they asked.
They were quite polite.
'Somewhere, round here, on this starry night,
A brand new baby king abides.
Can you tell us where this child resides?'
A worried look crossed Herod's face.
He had no plans to be replaced.
So he asked his priests if they could tell
Where this brand new baby king might dwell.

The priests all answered straight away.
'BETHLEHEM is what the prophets say.'
Then Herod thought an evil thing.
'I think I need to meet this king.
'Star-watchers, friends,' King Herod smiled.
'In Bethlehem you'll find the child.
Would you tell me where you find him, please?
An exact address to put my mind at ease.'

Herod, of course, told them a lie.
He'd already planned for the child to die.
When he found the boy, that's what he'd do.
So the star-watchers left, without a clue.

The shining star led them to the place.
A simple house, not some fancy space.
And when they saw the little boy,
They gave him a pile of special 'toys'.
Presents, rather, fit for a king.
A bunch of shiny golden things.
A spice called myrrh, a sort of perfume.
While smelly frankincense filled the room.
Then, in the night, they had a dream
That showed them Herod's evil scheme.
So they never said where the boy's house lay
But went straight home by another way.

'So what is the point of angels and shepherds
And camels and stars?' you say.
'Is it just a nice story to tell to the children
To celebrate Christmas Day?'

It's not just a story.
It's not just for kids.
It's the hinge on which history swings!

That Bethlehem baby grew into a man
Who challenged all powers and kings.
He taught us that love is better than hate,
That serving beats being in charge.
He showed us the value of each human life:
The little as well as the large.
And then, on a cross, he died for us,
Died to take all our wrongs away.
And walked, three days later, right out of his tomb
To turn death's dark night to day.

And that is the good news the angels proclaimed:
The heart of all Jesus would do.
A new life for now.
A new life forever.

That's his Christmas present to you!

God knocks down the proud,
And lifts up the meek,
And does mighty things
For those who are weak.

Sing praise to God and give him glory.
Celebrate his wondrous story
Of love and joy and peace to men,
For it begins in BETHLEHEM.

One HUMP, two HUMPS, lumpety-lump,
The star-watchers went with a BUMP and a THUMP.
One HUMP, two HUMPS, lumpety-lump,
The star-watchers followed the star!