

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Christmas Eve
December 24, 2025
rmcneely+

“For unto you is born this day in the City of David, a saviour,
which is Christ the Lord”

I should introduce myself. I am Mordecai.
Some of you may remember that at the prayer of your priest
I have been here before.
But tonight I asked to come
to tell you what happened on this night long ago;
because I am worried.

I am a shepherd
and this is not a comfortable moment for me.
As I told your Fr McNeely
I am no theologian.
I have no education
and do not speak well in front of people.

We shepherds live outdoors and we tend the flocks every day all
day and all night. I have hardly ever been to temple.

We live and work with the sheep
so I guess we smell like them
and are filthy by your standards.

We are shunned
so we don't have a lot to do with people
outside of other shepherds.

I learned the trade from my father
and we take pride in our work.
We raise the animals that our people rely upon for so many
things.
We raise the lambs for the Temple.

Only the very best are given to the priests to be sacrificed
but once we deliver the lambs
we are scuttled away from the temple.

Well, I was tending my flock just outside Bethlehem,
you know that little town
about 6 miles south of Jerusalem.

Several of us had congregated our flocks together for protection
that night.

We built a fire and shared our meal.
It is a rare good time for us.
it gave some of us some down time,
to talk,
to sing the psalms.

We love the psalms,
especially those written by another shepherd,
David.

Some of the guys have made instruments
and are good at playing them.

It was one of those clear, cold nights
when the stars were so bright,
you felt you could reach out and touch them.

All of a sudden, there was this person.
Larger than a human but in human form.

Some of the guys took to their
slings, clubs and staffs for protection.
He was dressed in brilliant white robes.

It is hard to describe
and many people don't believe me.
But he seemed to glow from within.
it was a light that I had never seen before or since.
It was strange but not unpleasant.
It did not blind the eyes
but it was over powering.

It seemed to penetrate into me.
To my very bones. To my soul.

We were terrified,
but then he spoke and said
“Fear Not. I bring you good tidings of great joy”.
And everything seemed to be OK.
A calm settled over us. The sheep did not stir.
I began to think that this being was an angel sent from God.

Then he said; “for unto you this day, in the City of David is born a saviour. Which is Christ, the Lord”.

It took a minute for us to comprehend.

Our race had been anxiously awaiting a saviour
for more than 400 years
and during that time,
God seemed to abandon us,

There were no longer any prophets sent from God, to guide us.
Since the Babylonian captivity

we seemed to lose all connection with God
and some said He had abandoned us.
Most prayed for a Messiah who would restore us to God.
But it has been so long.

He was telling us, of all people,
that our saviour was being born.
The Messiah had finally come,
God loves us after all
and it was all about to unfold.

This night would change our world and God had sent his angel to tell us about it. Us. The lowliest of the low.

And then he said, “and this shall be a sign unto you: “Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger”.
He let that sink in.

A manger? That is where the animals feed.

Cow spit,
decomposed fodder for the animals.

Our saviour was born in those conditions?

And as we tried to comprehend,
suddenly
the night sky ripped apart
and it was filled with angels,
hundreds,
no thousands of them.

Singing.

The most beautiful music I have ever heard. And they were singing
praises to God.

“glory to God in the highest
and on earth, peace
good will toward men”

And then they were all gone.

We sat in silence for a time.

Then one of the guys,

Matthias I think, said,
we need to go to Bethlehem
and pay homage to our new Saviour.

That is what the angel said to do.

As we walked to town, we figured that it would be easy to find
Him.

Surely

the high priests
and temple officials
from Jerusalem
had been told
and would precede us there.

All we had to do was follow the crowd and the noise.

But as we got into Bethlehem all was quiet.

There were few places to board animals and we soon came upon the scene.

We are always cautious about approaching people
because we know they don't want us around.

So we slowly approached
our hats in hand,
bowing
as we stepped into the light.

And it was just as the angel had described.

There was this newborn
wrapped in swaddling clothes,
laying on some straw
in a manger.

Next to Him was this girl,
a young woman I guess,
maybe 16 years old.
And next to her was an older man.

Both seemed not to know we were there as they gazed at the child.

But where were the Temple Officials,
the High Priest
and the elders?

Surely the angel had told . . .

We could not be the only . . .

Were we the people God had chosen to receive the glorious news?
I fell to my knees and then on my face before Him.

After a time, I told them of the Angel and what he had said,
of the music,
the light
and that we came and did as the angel hinted.

After a time, We wished them peace and walked back into the night.

Since that night everything has changed,
for me,
for my shepherd friends,
for the Holy couple,
for Jerusalem
for Judea,
for the world.

You probably know the rest of the story.

People have asked me about what it all meant,
that night.

And how it had effected my life.

As I said,

I am no theologian
and have no education,

but let me tell you this:

I don't know why God chose us to be the people He told of the birth of our saviour the son of God.

We are simple people
doing simple
but important work.

Before that night

I would have expected the Saviour
to have been born in the most elegant
and finest of palaces
attended by the highest of our society,
with the high priest,
with physicians,
scholars and attendants.

I would have expected that the entire nation would have known the news before we did.

But that is not how God works.

The Son of God was of humble origin,
 He was born in the most humble of circumstances
 and was first witnessed by the most humble of people. The
 Son of God was made man that night.

He is more interested in our soul's
 and hearts
 than anything else about us.

He created us and knows us so well.

And on that night,
 I beheld a mystery
 but it became so very clear to me
 that He came to save us,
 to restore our lives to God.
 to bring us Peace.

And I can't get over
 how very crucial that is to our lives
 and how people even today, don't understand the gift.

As I said I asked to come to you tonight because I am worried
 Worried about you and your world.
 Something dreadful is happening.

I am worried about families.
 God's building block of the world He created.
 Families seem to be in decline.
 Torn apart by dissension, pride, ignorance even hate.

I worry about many of you losing focus-
 Pulled away from the miracle that you are here to remember
 And celebrate this night.
 What are others doing right now?
 Wherever they are,
 Are they taking a moment to cherish the Nativity
 To consider what it has meant?

I worry about the evil unleashed in your lives and around the world.

The way people all too often treat each other.

I worry that for too many Jesus is slipping away
And because of it your world is falling apart.

I worry that people of today have forgotten:
What does Christmas represent if not
That one baby,
One little boy
Has made a difference in the world.

It is so important to remember this night,
That the Son of God,
One little boy was born
To restore you to God and to save your world.

But Above all I know this:
God is real and He exists.
He loves us.
He gave us His most precious Son
To redeem us from ourselves, our sins
I was there.
I saw it.
And it is the greatest gift of all time

Merry Christmas everyone.