Nox Domini Nostri – The Night of Our Lord / 1,495

What an exciting night this will be!

A frigid wind blows and rustles the leaves on every tree. In the field, two shepherds look out for their group of sheep, one of them sitting on a rock and nearly asleep. I watch a few soldiers conversate as they walk down a dimly lit street, past a wandering chicken and the regular life of the commoners. It’s quite extraordinary; Bethlehem is far away from Nazareth and the detours around Samaria are definitely less than pleasant, and yet the woman, her husband and her baby have made it all the way here in just a week. I think back to when she had gotten pregnant all those months ago. I remember seeing her pray and praise the Lord all day long; and sometimes she’d even look up at the sky towards me - a bright, lonely star up in the heavens - and thank God for giving her ***hope***.

Now I can see her enter through the gate into the city of David with her husband, and I know she will soon receive the hope she has held onto for all this time. *My* hope is that the baby will be warm enough. He deserves nothing but the best, especially on the night of his birth. I think of the innkeepers, who probably don’t have much room left in their houses because of the many visitors that usually come this time of year. I hope that at least one of them will let the woman and her husband stay for the night.

~

 The room smells of dirt, pigs, and unwashed clothes. The inn I’m tending has only two stories and somehow, I’ve managed to fit 20 families in altogether. The walls feel like they get closer and closer to me with every passing second. The noise doesn’t help either; an infant screaming, two men fighting over who would sleep where, and children running around and tripping over the other sleepy residents would be sure to keep me awake. The only bit of peace that I have to hold onto at this moment is the fact that I am here for a reason. The Lord Almighty has sent me down to earth to play the role of an innkeeper, though I have yet to find out why.

My mind drifts and I start to think of the time when my good friend Gabriel had come to a woman named Mary about nine months ago. When he had returned to heaven, he told me that God had sent him to tell Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah, the Son of God. The other angels and I rejoiced, of course, for we had been waiting thousands of years for Jesus to finally appear to humankind, and to his own people. Then we knew it was only a matter of time before God’s promise - that had been mentioned by many prophets in the years past - would be fulfilled. In fact, many of the other angels have been saying that today is the day that he will finally come.

I hear a faint knock on the door to the inn. I open it, and there stands a young couple, wrapped in shawls to keep out the cold. The woman looks to be very pregnant.

 “Hello, may we stay here tonight?” asks the man.

 Now *that* is odd. God told me before He sent me on my mission that two people would come to my inn looking for shelter just when it would be too full for anyone else. And apparently, He was right. He also made it clear that when it happens, I should turn them down.

 “I’m sorry, but we’ve run out of room. You’ll have to find another place,” I tell them.

 The man nods slowly and I watch as he continues down the street with one arm over his wife’s shoulder.

 That’s it. That’s all I had to do. Now what? Would that couple ever find a place to sleep? Why would the Almighty send me to this town just to deny two people shelter for rest? I suppose it doesn’t really matter. Actually, I’m deciding not to worry about it, for as long as the Lord Jesus is born tonight, I know that everything will be fine.

~

The numberof stars in the sky all cluttered together make me feel so lonely. Everyone else in Bethlehem gets to sleep tonight; everyone except the shepherds.

 A sheep calls loudly. I look behind me to see that it has fallen on its side and seems to be stuck. I walk over, gently pick it up and put it back on its feet.

 I glance at the other shepherd who’s with me. He’s sprawled over a large rock and probably sleeping. I sigh and sit down in the damp grass. The only thing to keep me company is that star. That big, bright star shining on a sea of white wool. Sometimes, when things seem hopeless, I like to imagine that the Lord will send something to cheer me up. The star is just what I need. It seems to signal importance, like something special is going to happen. Although, that sounds highly unlikely. Nothing special has happened here or anywhere around here for a long 400 years.

Then, out of nowhere, a bright light - brighter than the star that has been shining - covers everything in sight.

 “Do not be afraid! I bring good news of great ***joy***!” a booming voice declares against the night sky.

~

 I am shaken awake by one of the other sheep. I *baa* in protest, but she remains persistent.

 “*Baa, baa?*” I ask her.

 “*Baa baa, baaaa*!” she exclaims.

 What?! Our shepherds left us? But, how could they; I mean, what could be *that* important? Don’t they know that us sheep can’t fend for ourselves, especially at this time of night? I should find them and ask them myself. In fact, I think that’s just what I’ll do.

 I ask my friend which direction they headed. She replies that they were walking towards Bethlehem. I take off to the city as fast as my legs can carry me. It’s very dangerous; I could get eaten by a wolf or stolen by one of the townspeople. But I don’t care, I have to find out why our shepherds abandoned us. As I enter on a road, I hear the small sound of a child crying. I follow it and come to a stable, where I spot my shepherds. There they are! I cannot believe they had traveled all the way over here just for a screaming baby. Although I can’t see very much from where I’m standing at the gate of the stable, I have a feeling that the baby isn’t even that good-looking. It doesn’t deserve the attention of our shepherds, even if they don’t have much else to do tonight.

I enter the stable and stand near them. I can see other animals gathered here too; probably those that live in the stable. They must be so mad at the parents of the baby for invading their house. Then, I glance at him. The little child is being held in the arms of a very young woman. He doesn’t look very special to me, but everyone else (including the shepherds) must think otherwise. They’re all wearing the biggest smiles I’ve ever seen, especially the woman holding the baby.

Although, now that I see him, everything in me says that I’m home, and I’m overwhelmed with ***peace***. Nothing seems wrong anymore, though it doesn’t make any sense. Now all I want to do is stay with the baby and see where life takes him. He appears to be too small to do anything significant, but then I realize that he has already done something important in my heart.

~

The day is here! The Lord has fulfilled a promise he gave to me nine months ago; I have given birth to the son of God! Oh, just imagine all the things he’ll do when he’s grown. My little Messiah, how grateful I am to have you in my life. Do you know that your Father, God Almighty, has been the best thing that’s ever happened to me? All this time, He has remained faithful. He has worked through me to bring His gift unto the world, and unto His people. You, my son, are the light of my life, and will be a light in the lives of many others. What have I done, O Lord, to deserve this? Show me your ways, Almighty God, so that I may raise your son in a good manner. Blessed are You who bring joy to the world! Blessed are you, my precious baby, who will bring many great things into this broken world. You are the fruit of my labor, my great promise from God. I ***love*** you, my son…

Jesus.