The Manger Sign

Fourth in the series “Christmas discoveries”

# Key verses

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:12 NIV

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. Luke 2:16 NRSV

# Key Thought: Finding the baby in a manger is a sign to the shepherds.

What does this sign mean? What do we learn about Jesus from the manger sign?

# Jesus is Unique

A manger was a unique place for a baby to be - so the shepherds knew they had the right baby. The story of Jesus' birth is still unique. This is part of the attraction of Christmas. But it is also part of the message of Christmas. Jesus was a totally unique person. From his conception by the Holy Spirit to his miracle working life, to his heavenly origin, to his one-of-a-kind resurrection from the dead, he was unique. There never was another person who was both God and human at the same time. Jesus was totally unique. The uniqueness of the manger bed reminds us of the uniqueness of Jesus himself.

# Jesus was Humble

A manger was a humble place. The more we learn about who Jesus really was, how great he is; the more we are amazed that he was born in a stable, among the animals and that his first bed was a manger, the place from which the cattle and sheep ate. But the manger bed was a sign of what was to come in Jesus' life. His whole life was characterized by humility. He did not push himself forward. In the wilderness, the devil tried to get him to show off his power, but he refused the temptation to display the spectacular to draw attention. During his ministry. When he fed the 5000, the people wanted to crown him king, but he shunned the crowd, and went off by himself, refusing acclaim even when it came to him. Jesus described himself as "gentle and humble in heart" (Matt. 11:29 NIV). Humility was his path from birth.

Paul pointed out how both his lowly birth and his manner of death were signs of Jesus' humility.

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Phil 2:6-8 NIV

The manger was a humble place and the person who was laid there would be a humble leader; yet the greatest leader of all.

# In Jesus, God has made himself Accessible

This year, as I was thinking about the manger bed, another thought occurred to me. A manger was an accessible place for the shepherds. They were common people. Scholars tell us they were actually despised by the more well-to-do and looked down upon by many. Shepherds would not have been allowed in the palaces of rulers. But this was different. Jesus was born in a place they could come to. He was found in a place they felt comfortable to go. They were keepers of animals; they were familiar with mangers. See how far God has gone to make the message accessible to the poorest among us, especially to the poor; to the despised of the world, especially to the despised. Still today, the message of God's love for us in Jesus is accessible to all. One does not need to be rich, to belong any special group, or even be a certain age in order to love Jesus and decide to follow him, to model one's life after his. It is not complicated. He said simply, "Follow me!" All kinds of people celebrate Christmas, rich and poor alike. As we remember, we are all reminded of the message of God's love sent to each one of us. His birthplace was accessible to the shepherds; His message is accessible to us today. The Bible says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:8 NIV). Jesus taught us that we don't have to be in a particular place to worship God, we just need to approach him in "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). So just as the manger bed was open for the shepherds to come to, the manger can be s sign for us today as well that God is still making himself accessible.

# Conclusion

The manger was a sign all right. It was a sign of the uniqueness of Jesus; it was a sign of his humility and it was a sign of his accessibility to us all. And it still is. "O Come, Let us Adore Him" again this Christmas.