

# Melva's Corner

## REAL MOVERS AND SHAKERS

(Journey to Jesus)

December 11, 2006

(I Peter 1:10-12 RSV)

**Central Truth: You must live with people to know their problems, and live with God in order to help solve them.**

Sometimes the real movers and shakers in our everyday world never have their names recorded in history books. However, their importance in the grand scheme of things is enormous. I want to introduce you to several of those unnamed people. Without each of their actions, our lives, as well as the work of God, would feel so much less real and so much more distant. Their stories are the touches of a divine genuineness that ultimately capture our hearts even when our heads are not always in the same place. These well-known roles from such unnamed people are our reminder that not only does God know our world, He has also lived in it. These stories remind us that in Jesus, God has walked our streets, heard our voices, and suffered our sorrows. Most of all, He has seen us in the crowds and reached out to draw us into His powerful work of redemption. God does this by involving ordinary folks to make HIS-story believable for those of us who sometimes feel pretty ordinary and unimportant.

Let me tell you about the first of these folks: The Innkeeper.

**She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn. (Luke 2:7 NLT)**

So Mr. Innkeeper, how in the world did you find yourself in the middle of God's work to fulfill so many of His great promises? Hmm. I think I know! You see, I've known lots of folks like you; you were simply trying to make a little off a Roman legal edict since so many of Rome's decisions had cost you so much. An inn full of people is what you had prayed for a hundred times, even though you were never quite sure there was anyone beyond the

stars to hear your pleas. In fact, in moments of calm sobriety, you actually weren't sure you wanted the divine ones to know your name too well, since your profit came from drink and selling women for a night to the travelers far enough from home to exploit them. Since your inn is in a small town, you took what business you could find. Only a handful of the poor and devout even remembered the ol' legend about Bethlehem being the city of David. Not even King David's mighty legends could bring enough folks to town to keep the greedy palms of the tax collectors and their legal lackey's happy. It was your turn to profit.

Yes, the edict was an answer to this innkeeper's prayers! So, it was with great merriment that you joined the celebratory curses against Rome's taxes while counting the coins from your double-filled rooms, while gazing out at the crowded courtyard and while trying to forget the regrettable horde you had refused to cram in to the already twice-tight quarters. Still, it was hard for even you to turn them away, tired, bedraggled and anxious as they were. I can't imagine having to turn away a young woman, far from her home and already dripping with the sweat of labor. How could you?

So you did the unthinkable - in a moment of kind-hearted compassion and touched by a pull of some deep goodness you had long ago thought was lost, you took this couple to the cleanest, safest, most secure place you had at the time . . . the stable where you kept your family animals. Clean straw, warm enough, out of the way of gawkers and thieves — these quarters were actually better than most rooms at an inn with its raucous and rowdy regulars and impatient and put-out travelers in town to register and pay the tax. Besides, from the looks of things, the stable was not much lower than how these folks must have lived on any other normal day. You could rest tonight knowing that your pockets were full, your inn was crowded and you had not turned away a young family in distress.

Before you could think too much about it, your last round of undiluted wine enforced its unwanted curfew on you. You dropped into a foggy slumber. By the time you had awakened, your "out of the way" stable, and this peasant couple from Nazareth, had attracted quite a crowd with their new baby Jesus, hailed by passersby as the child of the census, King of the cows.

Isn't it amazing how time and situation make some people so very important? Here is a character we will never forget, even though we hardly see him in the murky shadows of his own inn. We don't know his name, only his actions. He was the one who assured us that Jesus would be born in a stable and make his first bed in a feed box. Imagine how he felt when he learned the truth about this child, who wasn't child of the census, but Son of God, and wasn't King of the cows, but is Christ the Lord. Part of us can't help but identify with him. After all, how was he supposed to know? Who would have known his inn and his stable and his manger would hold the King of glory?

Nevertheless, how would you like to be known through history as the one who said, "There's no room for the Messiah here!"

But then in retrospect, haven't we already said that a time or two ourselves? "Too busy to bother with Jesus and His mess right now, thank you! Got life to live, wild oats to sow, and some inns to visit. Sorry Jesus, I'll pick you up on down the line when I don't have so much I want to do, especially since I know you might not appreciate them all. Pardon me, but there's no room in my inn for you right now. Stay quaint. Stay cozy. Primarily, stay away."

So let's not get so lost in the sentiment that we forget this baby Jesus, this Savior of the world, has come knocking on our door asking to be our Lord. Let's revisit Bethlehem and open wide the door of our heart and let this Jesus find a room there where He can stay.

Oh, lest I forget, there's somebody else we must mention in this wonderful story of grace. He is know simply as An Angel.

**"Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy!" (Luke 2:9-10 NLT)**

Can you name the names of the angels? Some of my friends can. They've spent a lifetime studying about angels. To be honest, it makes me a little nervous sometimes, because it seems so much easier for them to talk about angels rather than Jesus. But they can't tell you a lot about this angel, at least not a lot that is factual. You see, this angel isn't named at all. He's not Michael. He's not Raphael. He's not Gabriel. This is just an average, ordinary, plain

ol' angel. He's simply known as "an angel." He was just one your of run-of-the-mill heavenly messenger boys God used to convey His information to those caught in more pedestrian pursuits down here on the dusty streets of our world. He was just "an angel."

I don't know about you, but you would think that God would have sent one of the top guns to proclaim the most important birth in this tiny blue planet's history. Nope! Not the way He did it. Not at all. While the whole scene is quite glorious and overwhelming for the shepherds, it was just your ordinary angel that did the talking. Of course it doesn't take a whole lot for a bunch of sheep-chasing shepherds to get excited. So maybe sending one of the "big boys" might have pushed them over the edge; after all, they got pretty stirred up with just "an angel."

I guess the reason God would pick an average, ordinary, plain ol' angel to deliver such startling news is pretty easy to understand. So many of us are like those shepherd, even on our best days, we're not much more than average, ordinary, plain folks.

That just leaves us with one real question to answer about this whole angel deal then, doesn't it. Where did the glory come from if these were just average, ordinary, plain angels led by an unnamed leader dubbed simply, "an angel"?

Well, the way I figure it, there are two things that make average, ordinary, plain things special: either they come from God or they spend their time talking about His son Jesus. So in this field, out there where only the woolies and the shepherds would sleep, a bunch of average, ordinary, plain angels and their unnamed leader lit up the night sky and forever changed the lives of a bunch of unknown sheep-chasing shepherds, not to mention millions of their unnamed admirers. The glory came because they managed to get both parts of this glory business to come together at the same time, in a wonderfully unexpected place, with a bunch of surprised witnesses that God had handpicked before the first ray of sunlight.

I love reading most parts of the Bible. (I know that truly righteous people even like the "begats" in Chronicles, but I have to admit there some patches that I can't quite get into!) I have to confess, though, that Luke is my favorite. He listened long and hard to the folks who saw all the Jesus story so he could tell us about Jesus in a way that was carefully accurate. However, Luke had a bit of

spin he put on the story. You see, he wanted us to meet all the unknown, oft-forgotten, nameless folks who were powerless to change their world. He wanted us to see what happens when average, ordinary, plain folks get a dose of heavenly glory.

I'm pretty sure Luke was real pleased that God chose to send just "an angel" instead of one of the big boys, to alert the shepherds. I know Luke figured God did it that way to remind us that when we tell others about the gracious gift of salvation in Jesus, we somehow crack open a dose of glory that is not our own. In fact, I think Luke would tell us that most average, everyday, plain angels don't have feathers, halos, or wings, but have been in the presence of God just long enough that they realize there is nothing more glorious than telling someone else that Jesus has come - and bottom line, His coming is just flat wonderful. In fact, it is so wonderful, that is exactly what this ol' war-torn world needs are just a few more folks to decide that they are "an angel" and are willing to go tell others that Jesus has come for them.

So let me say it one more time in case you missed it: God came to live with us in Jesus so we could enjoy a special loving relationship with Him. Don't take my word for it, ask "An Angel."

Then there's one other group that didn't make it to the manger, but they made it to Jesus all the same: The Magi.

**Wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?" We have seen his star as it arose and we have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:1-2 NLT)**

Stargazers from a long way off made a long journey to visit the baby king and give Him expensive gifts, even though He was part of a people who thought they were a bunch of evil misguided pagans? Doesn't sound like most folks from their neighborhood would have labeled them "wise men," does it? Men in mid-life crisis, maybe is how their wives saw it. Dads gone on another long business trip maybe is how the kids saw it. I'm sure their peers thought they had smoked too much of the poppy seed and had gone over the edge.

But we know better, now, don't we. Since their long journey to give their extravagant gifts to Jesus, millions of others over the course of centuries have made a long trek from their own selfishness and

lack of purpose to the place of submission and significance. You see, as extravagant as their gifts might have been, the Magi's greatest gift was their willingness to search to find Jesus even though it required a long and difficult journey.

So while we may not know any of the names of the Magi, we can follow them on their journey by beginning our own search for the Christ. We can see in their search, the need of all who seek something more; something more real and permanent than what this world offers. We can see in their search the need for all people of all cultures to come and place their treasures before Jesus. Something inside of each of us needs to come as an unnamed trekker and kneel in the presence of Christ, and worship Him with joy.

John told us that a world full of books couldn't contain all the incredible things that Jesus did. (John 21:25) So I guess I'll have to stop right here for today, with these unnamed, but well known average, everyday, plain folks who somehow found themselves caught up in the heart of history.

So please hear the message of these unnamed yet widely known folks - whether they are an innkeeper, an angel, or a traveling stargazer. Please believe the message of their story. Each of us common folks find ourselves caught up in a divine story of wondrous glory and eternal importance. This happens when we are willing to open our hearts to Jesus, tell others about His glory and grace, and bow down in worship to offer Him our treasures. And even though our time spent in the divine story of grace may be fleeting, and our name unknown to most of the watching world, our time here won't have been wasted, our efforts will have been important, and the world we leave behind will be changed. God has always used average, ordinary, plain people to make a world of difference!

I know an old saying that goes something like this: 1 + God = a Majority. But I guess what's more important for me today is that we know that any unnamed friend of Jesus is a world changer . . . a mover and shaker. While his or her name may be unknown to the masses, the impact on the world will not go unnoticed!

So I simply want to ask you three questions:

1. Will you open your heart to Him?
2. Will you share with others the story of His grace?
3. Will you give Him your treasures so He can give you His glory, forever?

You see, this whole deal about mangers, shepherds, and wise men are not just stories about people who lived long ago and far away in a time and place much different from our own. No, these are stories about you and me who struggle to find a life that's real, meaningful and gives us a glimpse of glory that's waiting for us around the next bend in our journey to Jesus.

Scriptural References:

**“The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”  
(I Peter 1:10-12 RSV)**