



The Christmas Story

When we read the Christmas story we often focus on the angels and the star. We wonder about the girl, Mary, who would give birth to God's son, and about Joseph who would take her as his wife knowing she was carrying a child that was not his. We try to imagine the wonder the shepherds felt when the angels filled the sky with their song, and picture those shepherds standing around the manger, trying to understand who the baby lying there would grow up to be. We ask questions the Bible does not answer. What did the people in Bethlehem think when the shepherds told their story (Luke 2:16-20); and what happened next? Since Jesus was probably about two by the time the wisemen arrived, why had Joseph not taken Mary and Jesus home to Nazareth in all that time? The wisemen found them in a house (Matthew 2:10-11). Were they staying with relatives or friends? Did Joseph have his tools with him so he could work as a carpenter to support his family? What was it like to have visitors from a far-off country come to their door and then have another angel tell them to flee to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15)? Could the wisemen's gifts have helped them live in Egypt till it was safe to return to Nazareth, or did someone in Egypt help them survive there? Did Joseph find work in Egypt to keep them going?

While the circumstances this young couple faced may not be much like our own, they have a lot in common with the experiences of thousands of refugees in our world today. Refugees too are forced to leave their homes by circumstances they cannot control. They often travel long distances and end up in places where there is no room or welcome for them. They face danger, must depend on the kindness of others to survive, and may be uprooted more than once. Unlike Mary and Joseph, many will never be able to return home. . .

Remember, when Jesus speaks of our calling to help the strangers among us, (Matthew 25:31-46) he knows what it means to be one!

This week pray for:

All people who are uprooted and displaced. Right now there are 68.5 million forcibly displaced people in the world. 25.4 million are refugees, 40 million are internally displaced; 3.1 million are seeking asylum. That is 1 in every 110 people on earth, a record high (UN Refugee Agency statistics).