

## The Christmas Story based on St Luke's Gospel, The Message version

A few years ago I filled an Advent calendar (the Ikea one with small drawers) for my young grandchildren and wanted to put in a short piece each day to tell them the Christmas story. So I read St Luke chapters 1 & 2 in The Message Bible, then wrote up the story for them, using both Eugene Peterson's and my own words. I use the Conversations version of The Message, as I find Peterson's insights into the various situations very enlightening. As well as opening the little gift each day, my grandchildren greatly enjoyed hearing the verses read to them, building up the story day by day.

We will do the same each day and here it is all together.

*A young girl named Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel, who told her that she would have a baby. She was very surprised, but said "Yes!" to God's angel.*

*Joseph, Mary's fiancé, was also visited by the Angel, who told him about Mary's baby. Joseph was told to name the baby Jesus.*

*Joseph and Mary had to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted for the census - it was a long, tiring journey.*

*They could not find anywhere to stay in Bethlehem, and went from inn to inn getting the same answer: "There's no room here."*

*At last, an innkeeper took pity on them and let them into his stable at the back, to rest.*

*The animals were still living in the stable, so it was quite smelly, but warm.*

*It was time for the baby to be born, right there in the stable.*

*Mary wrapped her son in strips of cloth and laid him gently in the manger, on the hay.*

*Joseph named the baby Jesus, just as the angel had told him to.*

*That night, some shepherds were out on the hillside near Bethlehem, looking after their sheep.*

*It was a cold night, and the shepherds took turns to watch for anything that might harm their sheep.*

*Suddenly, God's angel appeared in a bright light - the shepherds were afraid.*

*"Don't be afraid", said the angel, "for I bring you very good news. A baby has been born who will save the world, just as God promised."*

*"You will find Him lying in a manger, in Bethlehem."*

*Then the angel was joined by a huge choir of angels, all singing and praising God because the special baby had been born.*

*They sang, "Glory to God in the heavenly heights. Peace to all people who please Him."*

*After the angels had disappeared, the shepherds talked excitedly about what they had said.*

*They quickly decided to go and find the child, and ran off to look for Him.*

*They soon found Mary and Joseph and the baby, just as the angel had said. So they knew this was a special moment.*

*After leaving the stable, the shepherds told everyone they met what the angel had said about the child.*

*Everyone was impressed by what they heard, and soon realised that God had kept His promise to send someone who would help people understand how much He loves us, even when we mess up.*

*They just did not expect that special person to be a baby! Did you?!*

*Mary thought deeply in her heart about all the things that were happening - she knew that God was at work.*

*Rejoice with the shepherds and angels - "on earth as it is in heaven".*

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