

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

“God doesn’t give you anything you can’t handle”.
“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger”. “It’s God’s will”.
We have all heard these phrases meant to give us comfort, but I am always tempted to respond that I wish God didn’t have quite so much confidence in me. I wanted to throw myself on the floor and let my inner child have a full-blown tantrum. I don’t want to be strong! I really can’t handle this! My child dying can’t possibly be God’s will! Why would He give Aaron to us, only to take him again so quickly? Didn’t I pray hard enough that Aaron’s miracle could come true?

This time of year I reflect back to another young mother who lived 2,000 years ago. She was visited by an angel, who informed her she would give birth to the Messiah. I’m sure she thought “why me?” Can you imagine THAT conversation she had with her parents and newly betrothed fiancée?

“Yes, I am pregnant BUT the baby is the Messiah, the Son of God”. In a region of the world where women are sometimes killed for dishonoring their family this required a great leap of faith for everyone involved.

Then the Roman emperor declared he needed a census and everyone had to report in person. Here is poor little Mary, nine months pregnant, who has to travel 80 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to report to the census (yes, Luke Googled the distance for me). Traveling is hard enough in modern times when you are that pregnant, but can you imagine riding a donkey or walking those 80 miles? I’ll bet she questioned God’s will every step of that trip! They finally reach their destination, only to be told there is no place for them to stay, and nowhere for her to deliver her Child. I’m sure now they BOTH questioned God’s will. “Lord, why would you bring us this far, and not provide a place for us to stay?”

Well, God did provide a place for them to stay. It wasn’t the Hilton, but it was warm and dry and safe from wild animals and thieves. So it was that the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Savior of the world came to find his first bed was a manger of straw. So it was that a number of God’s humble creatures were the first to see the Savior; and shortly after that, more of God’s humblest people, shepherds.

I always wonder whether the Holy Family were aware of all the hubbub in the heavens-a new star never before seen guiding Wise Men from the East to see the new king, angels and cherubim singing glory to God and spreading the news of the birth of the Messiah. Were they aware of the long-awaited prophecies coming true and their names becoming part of those prophecies? Or were they more concerned with immediate matters such as staying warm and fed? Did Mary wonder about the other prophecies; that this new little precious Child would have to suffer and die to save mankind? Was she worried about mothering and providing love and care for this extraordinary Child? Was her faith strong enough that she believed that God had blessed her so far; he would continue to bless and provide for her? God assures us he will wipe away all our tears and bring comfort to His people. “Suffering may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”. I believe He makes and keeps these promises to help us endure these tests of faith and painful times. God Himself is a bereaved parent-He understands our pain, our suffering and our never ending questions “why me?” “why my child?” God loves us so much He sent His only Son to die for us; that we may have eternal life with Him and those we love.

I pray that the promises of God will bring you comfort, healing and strength during this Christmas season, when you hear those joyful greetings and feel you will never feel joy again. I pray that remembering the faith of that long-ago young family and your own faith will bring you courage and hope to get through those times when you think you are not strong enough-when you miss your child so much it is a physical pain. I pray that the love of those who love you and love your child will lift you up and lovingly hold you close when you are in that deep, dark despair so you can look up and see the beautiful light of your child’s life.

In friendship,

Nadine

