

Christmas Talk by Cherice Montgomery, December 2017

What can we learn from the Christmas story?

- Heavenly Father has a plan for each one of us (Jesus, Nativity people, and each of us).
- Sometimes the plan requires us to do hard things, even when we are doing everything we are supposed to do.
- Heavenly Father sent Jesus Christ to show us how to be happy as we follow His plan for our lives, even when it is hard.

HEAVENLY FATHER'S PLANS FOR US OFTEN DIFFER FROM OUR PLANS FOR OURSELVES

Mary: My plan – Ph.D. program, go back and teach in K-12, NOT a univ. and NOT in UT, but Heavenly Father had a different plan—made it clear before I had even started my dissertation that I was supposed to move to UT and teach at BYU

26 And in the sixth month the ^aangel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a ^avirgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. (Luke 1:26-27)

A woman named Mary was planning to **get married** to a man named Joseph. She was probably really **happy and excited** when she thought about what would happen next.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among ^awomen.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, ^aFear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name ^aJESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the ^aSon of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the ^bthrone of his father ^cDavid:

33 And he shall ^areign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no ^bend. (Luke 1:28-33)

But then an **angel** came to her and told her that **Heavenly Father had a different plan** for her—first she was going to **have a baby named Jesus** and he was going to be a king.

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WHEN PLANS CHANGE, HUMBLY ACCEPT & TRUST THAT THE LORD IS TRYING TO BLESS US

Sometimes like Mary, **our lives are going really well** and then **something changes**—we get a new teacher at school, we lose a job, someone dies, or a new baby is born. Sometimes the change is sudden and unexpected, and at other times, Heavenly Father tells us in advance through a feeling, a priesthood blessing, a powerful dream, or as we are reading our scriptures. When change happens, we can choose to look at it as an **opportunity to learn new things that will help us learn to be even happier** now and in the future, or we can let ourselves **be frustrated** instead.

*34 Then said Mary unto the angel, **How shall this be, seeing I ^aknow not a man?***

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The ^aHoly Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the ^bSon of God.

36 And, behold, thy ^acousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her ^bold age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be ^aimpossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

46 And Mary ^asaid, My soul doth ^bmagnify the Lord,

47 And my spirit hath ^arejoiced in God my ^bSaviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his ^ahandmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me ^bblessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great ^athings; and ^bholy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. (Luke 1:34-50)

Mary chose to trust the Lord. Even though she was **confused** because she knew she and Joseph weren't married yet and that she wasn't pregnant, but the angel told her that, "**with God nothing shall be impossible.**" Mary was humble and grateful. Mary decided to **believe** the angel and agreed to **follow Heavenly Father's plan** for her life, **even though it seemed crazy** and she knew that **other people might laugh and not believe her**. She chose to **thank Heavenly Father for choosing her to do the hard job** of becoming Jesus's mother.

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WHEN THINGS GET HARD, CHOOSE TO BE GRATEFUL

Insert relevant personal experience

Joseph

*4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called ^aBethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
5 To be taxed with Mary his ^aespoused wife, being great with child. (Luke 2:4-5)*

All these unbelievable things were happening to Mary, and Joseph must have had **doubts** about the news. He had to **decide** whether he was going to believe her, stay with her, and help her, or not. He was also probably **worried** about whether or not he would be good enough to teach Jesus everything He needed to know.

But **even though he and Mary decided to accept Heavenly Father's plan for their lives, things just kept getting harder!** Mary was going to have her very first baby, but instead of getting ready for the baby, they had to walk 92 miles to get from a city named Galilee all the way to another city named Bethlehem—not to visit family, but because they had to pay their taxes!

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her ^afirstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the ^binn. (Luke 2:6-7)

Then, as if they hadn't had enough stress in their lives, when they got to Bethlehem, all the inns (or hotels) were full because there were so many visitors in the city. So Mary and Joseph had to go stay with the stinky animals! The animals usually ate out of a wooden box called a manger, and that is where Mary put baby Jesus when He was born because she didn't have a crib. **How disappointing that must have been for Joseph, a carpenter, who had the skills to make him a beautiful crib, but just couldn't at that time.**

Sometimes, like Mary & Joseph, our lives seem to be full of disappointment and stress. One hard thing after another happens and we wonder if we will ever be happy again. However, like Mary and Joseph, we can choose to look for ways to make things work and can find what is positive. If we just keep trying to do what we know we are supposed to be doing, Heavenly

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Father will send us comfort and hope to help us keep going. Usually, He does that by putting other people in our lives who help us know that what we are going through is part of Heavenly Father's plan and that He is watching over us. In the Christmas story, Heavenly Father did this through the shepherds, the wise men, John the Baptist's family (Zaccharias and Elisabeth), and Simeon and Anna. All of these people were doing what they were supposed to be doing, which made it possible for them to be part of the miracle of the Christmas story.

[Insert relevant personal experience.](#)

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Shepherds

*8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, **keeping watch over their flock by night.***

*9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the **aglory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.***

*10 And the angel said unto them, **Fear not:** for, behold, I bring you **agood tidings** of great **bjoy**, which shall be to all people.*

*11 For unto you is **aborn** this day in the city of David a **bSaviour**, which is Christ the **cLord**.*

*12 And this shall be a **asign** unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

*15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, **the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.***

*16 And they came with **ahaste**, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.*

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

*18 And all they that heard it **awondered** at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*

*19 But Mary kept all these things, and **apondered** them in her heart.*

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. (Luke 2:8-20)

FAITH MEANS TAKING ONE STEP AFTER ANOTHER - For example, the shepherds were taking care of their sheep when an angel appeared to them and told them that baby Jesus had been born. Like the shepherds, we need to make sure we work to take care of ourselves and the people around us. When we do that, Heavenly Father will teach us how to help ourselves and the people we are supposed to take care of in ways that will make us happy.

At first, the shepherds were afraid of the information the angel gave them. Sometimes, like the shepherds, we might also be scared to act on the thoughts and feelings we are given. But the shepherds decided to exercise their faith. That means they decided not to let doubt, fear, and worry keep them from quickly taking action. So they went on a trip to see baby Jesus. Think about what they would have missed if they had told themselves that it might be too hard, take too much time, or be too far to travel!

After the shepherds saw baby Jesus, they thanked Heavenly Father and then shared what they learned with the people around them. When try to do the things we think and feel Heavenly Father telling us to do, He will bless us in ways that make us happy too.

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Wise Men

*1 Now when Jesus was ^aborn in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came **wise men from the east** to Jerusalem,*

2 Saying, ^aWhere is he that is born ^bKing of the Jews? for we have seen his ^cstar in the east, and are come to ^dworship him.

*9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, **the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.***

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

*11 ¶ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped him**: and when they had opened their treasures, **they presented unto him gifts; gold, and ^afrankincense, and myrrh.***

*12 And being **warned of God in a ^adream** that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. (Matthew 2:1-12)*

LOOK FOR THE LIGHT - The wise men were also doing what they were supposed to be doing. They had studied the scriptures, so when they saw the bright star in the East, they knew that Jesus had been born. They followed the star until they found Jesus and Heavenly Father kept them safe by warning them that King Herod wanted to hurt them.

Like the wise men, we can learn things from Heavenly Father that will keep us safe and happy by reading the scriptures and trying to apply what we learn from them in our own lives. Light helps drive away darkness. Light helps us see. Light helps us grow. But like the wise men, we need to stay focused on the light—the positive things in our lives and in the world—instead of letting ourselves spend a lot of time thinking about all the things in our lives that are hard, scary, or make us worry.

Also, the wise men gave Jesus gifts of things that were most precious to them. We often think that means we have to exhaust ourselves to please Heavenly Father and Jesus. However, as I have thought about this, I have realized that what Jesus wants us to give Him are our doubts, our fears, our pains, our sicknesses, and our worries so that He can give us “beauty for ashes, strength for peace, gladness for mourning.”

Insert relevant personal experience.

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Simeon & Anna

*25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was **Simeon**; and the same man was **just and devout**, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and **the Holy Ghost was upon him**.*

*26 And it was **revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost**, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

*27 And **he came by the Spirit into the temple**: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,*

*28 Then took he him up in his arms, and **blessed God**, and said,*

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

*30 For mine eyes have seen thy ^a**salvation**,*

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

*32 A ^a**light** ^b**to lighten** the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:25-32)*

*36 And there was one **Anna**, a ^a**prophetess**, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was **of a great age**, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;*

*37 And she was a **widow** of about fourscore and four years, which **departed not from the temple**, but served God with ^a**fastings** and prayers night and day.*

*38 And she coming in that instant **gave thanks** likewise unto the Lord, and **spake of him to all them that looked for** ^a**redemption** in Jerusalem.*

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

*40 And the child grew, and ^a**waxed** strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the ^b**grace** of God was upon him. (Luke 2:36-40)*

HEALTHY HABITS HAPPEN ONE CHOICE AT A TIME - Simeon and Anna were both good people. They “served God with fastings and prayers” and both patiently waited for Heavenly Father to fulfill His promises. They made visiting the temple a habit, and came to the temple because they were listening to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Because they did these things, Heavenly Father blessed them, and used them to reassure Mary and Joseph. The shepherds, the wise men, Simeon, and Anna all testified that Heavenly Father had told them all about what was happening to Mary and Joseph and that everything was going according to plan.

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Insert relevant personal experience.

Baby Jesus

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the ^afeast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

*43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, **the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.***

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

*46 And it came to pass, that **after three days they found him in the ^atemple**, sitting in the midst of the ^bdoctors, ^cboth hearing them, and ^dasking them questions.*

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his ^aunderstanding and answers.

*48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, **thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.***

*49 And he said unto them, **How is it that ye sought me? ^awist ye not that I must be about my ^bFather's business?***

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was ^asubject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her ^bheart.

52 And Jesus ^aincreased in ^bwisdom and stature, and in ^cfavour with God and man. (Luke 2:41-52)

In Primary this month, we have been learning about the fact that even Jesus learned things one step at a time. His body, mind, and spiritual understanding all grew—each time he applied something he learned, he was given the power and ability to learn more. That was true in his relationships with Heavenly Father and with the people around him as well.

This teaches us that we need to be patient with ourselves and with others, because we are all growing one step at a time.

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Summary

- Heavenly Father had a plan for Jesus Christ and He has a plan for each one of us too.
- Heavenly Father's plan asked Jesus to do REALLY hard things, and even though Jesus was perfect and Jesus always did what His Heavenly Father wanted him to do, He still experienced a lot of sadness, pain, and suffering. We will too because that is part of how we learn and grow.
- However, Heavenly Father sent Jesus Christ to show us how to be happy as we follow God's plan, even when it is hard.
 - MARY – Like Mary, Jesus cares for us with tenderness. “Can a mother forget her sucking child? I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”
 - JOSEPH – Like Joseph, Jesus is the master carpenter who knows how to make our lives beautiful and can fix anything within us that is broken.
 - SHEPHERDS – Like the shepherds, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who looks for us when we are lost and will die to protect us. All He asks in return is that we feed His sheep.
 - WISE MEN – Like the Wise Men, Jesus gives us the gift of love, strength, and happiness in exchange for us giving Him all of our doubts, fears, jealousies, worries, weaknesses, and imperfections.
 - STAR – Like the star, Jesus is the shining example that we should follow—the light and life of the world. He asks us to follow Him and to reflect that light into the lives of those around us. As we learn about Him, follow His example, and try to be like Him, He gives us power to see how to get through the darkness in our lives. We have to choose to focus on what is positive.
 - BABY JESUS – Like baby Jesus, our bodies, minds, and spirits develop one step at a time. As we try to do what is right and make it a habit to follow truth, He gives us more truth, more opportunities to apply it, and more happiness from obeying it.
 - It is my testimony that Jesus died so that we could experience happiness, so that we could have the power to make it through the hard times in our lives, and so that we could live again.

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The Christmas story doesn't start with Jesus! It begins in Luke 1:5 with Zacharias the priest and his wife, Elisabeth:

¶ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named ^aZacharias, of the course of ^bAbia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

(Luke 1:5)

The scriptures say:

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ^aordinances of the Lord blameless.

(Luke 1:6)

In other words, they were doing all the things they were supposed to do.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was ^abarren, and they both were now well ^bstricken in years.

(Luke 1:7)

So even though they were doing what the Lord wanted them to do, they hadn't received the blessings that they wanted.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the ^apriest's office before God in the order of his ^bcourse,

(Luke 1:8)

Even though they didn't get what they wanted, and according to human wisdom, it looked like it would never happen, they remained faithful.

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But they kept praying for what they wanted, and Heavenly Father sent an angel to tell them they were going to be blessed in ways that would make them and other people really happy.

13 But the angel said unto him, ^aFear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a ^bson, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither ^awine nor strong drink; and he shall be ^bfilled with the ^cHoly Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I ^aknow this? for I am an ^bold man, and my wife well ^cstricken in years.

19 And the ^aangel answering said unto him, I am ^bGabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be ^adumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou ^bbelievest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

(Luke 1:13-20)