

# *Listening for the Promise*

## WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

**Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas Eve) — December 24, 2023**

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

- Isaiah 9:6 -

Jesus of Nazareth was born in the most humble of circumstances. Caesar Augustus, the ruler of the Roman Empire, ordered a census to be taken. His father Joseph was from the line of David, but many generations separated him from any throne. Instead, Joseph was a simple carpenter from a small town. Mary, his wife, was a young girl, pregnant in extraordinary circumstances. She was well into her pregnancy when they had to travel to Bethlehem to register. The journey was long and over harsh wilderness. It was dangerous and exhausting for someone in excellent health, but it must have been difficult at best for the pregnant mother. Most of the miles traveled were done on foot with only a donkey to carry supplies.

When the couple arrived in Bethlehem, they found the town crowded with others who had traveled to register, others who belonged to the house of David. There was nowhere for Mary to rest. She was feeling the early pains of childbirth as they searched for a place to stay. At last an innkeeper had mercy and allowed them to bed with the animals. There, among the smells and noises of the beasts, Mary gave birth to her son. Joseph served as the midwife, a feeding trough was the cradle. The first visitors to this humble scene were shepherds, the lowest of the low in that society. These were humble beginnings for any child, but this Jesus of Nazareth was not just any child. He was the King, and from the moment of his birth he was the target of men who feared him.

That baby should have had the best of everything. His parents should have traveled with a grand procession. He should have been born in the finest room in a palace. He should have had the best doctors. His bed should have been made from the finest wood and lined with silk and down. He should never have feared the swords of men, but God never does things as we would expect. Jesus Christ, the King of kings, Lord of lords, arrived in this world in the simplest, most frightening way. It seems impossible to believe that God’s greatest promise was fulfilled that night, but in the flesh of that tiny baby was the Savior of the world.