

The Nobodies of Christmas

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The secret message inside the Christmas story? God invites the nobodies.

When important people come to town, everyone one knows it. NBA stadiums sell out months before LaBron or Kobe show up for game time. When Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson do a personal appearance, hundreds of screaming fans will show up hours ahead of time. When the President visits your city, you can be sure the mayor will meet him at the airport, and schoolchildren will be there to give the First Lady flowers.

The Christmas story shows us that God does things differently. You might even call His way sneaky. The most important person in the history of the world snuck into town late one night and definitely did not stay in a five-star hotel. Actually, Jesus was smuggled into Bethlehem through the womb of a teenage girl, who gave birth in a barn. That's different.

We all know the story of Christmas: the baby, the barn, the shepherds, and magi. Hidden inside that familiar story is the surprising revelation that God's way is to ignore the bigshots and use nobodies instead. Just count the nobodies:

Mary was a teenage girl from a small town. In Bible times, women were not important people, and teenagers were even lower on the scale. Mix in her pre-marital pregnancy, and you've got a real nobody on your hands. Mary was God's choice. She conceived the baby Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. God considered her somebody important and gave her a pretty tough assignment!

Joseph was a nobody, too. He was just a working man. He was faced with a choice between trusting God or protecting his small-town reputation. But reputations belong to important people, and most of the important people were in Jerusalem. Joseph said yes to shame, yes to love, and yes to God, so God chose Joseph to act as a foster-father to the Savior of the world.

Shepherds are not important people, just the opposite: second-shift schmucks who work outdoors. Back in that day, watching sheep was not exactly a rock-star kind of gig. Yet they were the first guests invited to the celebration; they saw the skies ripped open and heard the song of heaven. In just one winter night, these social misfits witnessed more of God's glory than all the priests in Jerusalem.

The Magi: They were nothing more than rich pagan astrologers. It didn't matter if they had money; they were foreigners. Foreigners have the wrong religion, the wrong clothes, and the wrong sacred books--yet the Father invited these rich pagan astrologers, strangers in Israel, to celebrate the birth of the King.

Elizabeth & Zechariah were a kindly old couple engaged in harmless religious activity. They are the kind of people society ignores--unless they are driving too slow on the highway. This childless couple found themselves unexpectedly drafted to care for and raise the greatest

prophet of the Old Testament tradition--and the forerunner to the Messiah.

Anna & Simeon: Alone and elderly, they were two people almost completely invisible in Jerusalem. Invisible to everyone except the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God had been whispering to them for decades that they would witness the most important event in human history. Even after they held the baby Jesus that day in the Temple, the world would have considered them people at the margins of society, yet Simeon and Anna were in on God's secret plan decades before the rest of the world knew what was going on.

The secret message inside the Christmas story? God invites the nobodies. And when God invites you to the table, He provides everything you need. The powerful people, the beautiful people, and the cool kids might not make it to the celebration. They're welcome, but they might be too busy building their own kingdoms. Meanwhile, God's kingdom is filling up with the people no one notices.

This season, if you are a nobody—rejoice! You are not far from the Kingdom of God.