

Christmas / The Prince of Peace

Tammy: This has got to be my favorite time of the year.

Carol: I know, Tammy. It's the anticipation. It seems we start to think about Christmas in September.

Tammy: Well the shops are to blame for that. They start to decorate and remind us of Christmas about then. But I agree. This is a special time. Do you and your family have a special tradition that you try and keep each year?

Carol: We do! Every year we would each either buy or make a special decoration. I would date each one and put the family members name on it before we hung it on the tree. It started small. But now each year as we decorate the tree we have fun looking at each of the decorations and remembering where we were living and how old we each were - and looking back at Christmases past helps us to remember the blessing of family and God's care over us through the years. And one day, when our children get married, I will box up their decorations and give them as a gift to start their own family tradition.

How about you, Tammy?

Tammy: Well before we decorate our Christmas tree – my husband drives a nail into it some place on the trunk. We set it up and decorate it and enjoy it all season as we remember Christ's birth. Then, at the end of the season, as we put away the decorations and take down the tree we hunt for that nail. It is a reminder to us that Christ came into this world to die for us on a tree to pay for our sins.

Carol: That's a beautiful reminder Tammy.

Tammy: A very special Christmas welcome to Women of Hope. I wonder what special things *you* do with *your* family and friends at Christmas. We would love to hear from you... we'll give you the contact information at the end of the program.

Carol: Today we'd like to share with you the *true* meaning of Christmas from God's word, the Bible. The first part of the word Christmas is 'Christ'...that's Jesus Christ. And God's word tells us the most important story we have ever heard – about Jesus Christ coming to our world.

I think the best place to start is with a young girl called Mary. According to the custom of the Jewish

people, she was probably only 15 or 16 years old at the time she was promised in marriage to a man whom she knew, Joseph. Joseph was a descendant of King David. We've often heard stories of King David haven't we! David was a shepherd, and a very brave one who one day saved the people of Israel from the giant, Goliath – you might remember that story. Then eventually he became king...and God promised him long ago that one day, Jesus, the messiah would be born in his line.

Tammy: We don't know how Mary felt about her engagement, but we can assume that she was quite happy that she would soon marry Joseph.

But one day, something most unusual happened...Mary was just going about her normal daily tasks when she heard a voice.

Carol and I are going to take turns to tell you this story from God's word, the Bible. And in between, we'll listen to some of those lovely Christmas carols we hear every year. So get comfortable ... Here is the *true* story of Christmas from God's word... (Luke 1:26 – 38 NLT)

Carol: 'God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary... Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Young Mary was confused and disturbed. She tried to think what the angel could mean.

"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him *Jesus*. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor, David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be *holy*, and he will be called *the Son of God*. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.'

Tammy: Can you imagine how this young girl, Mary, felt when she heard what the angel said to her? The Bible tells us she was confused...and disturbed, but she didn't seem to be afraid. But she was

puzzled wasn't she? She was old enough to know that a woman didn't have a baby unless she had slept with a man – so she asked a sensible question.

“How can this happen? I am a virgin?”

Carol: And do you remember the angel Gabriel's answer – it was probably one of the most important things we could ever hear about Jesus. He said, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the baby to be born will be *holy*, and he will be called *the Son of God*.”

This is why we always say on Women of Hope, that Jesus is the *Son of God*. He was not just a good man, or a prophet, like the other prophets. He had no earthly father – his father was God himself.

Then, sweet young Mary gave a very special answer didn't she...” “I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.”

Mary had obviously been brought up in a home where she knew who God was – and she knew that she could trust him. But what a huge responsibility... she was about to carry the *Son of God* in her womb and in 9 months, bring him into the world.

Carol: Now, remember what the angel said to Mary about her relative, Elizabeth?... He said that she was also pregnant, even though she had been barren. Let's listen as Tammy tells us the next part of the story...

Tammy: (Luke 1: 39 – 55 NLT) “A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah (Elizabeth's husband) lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth.

At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

Carol: Did you hear that? Elizabeth –was much older than young Mary and yet she asked, “Why am I so honored, that the *mother of my Lord* should visit me?” What an unusual greeting from an older relative! Usually it would be the younger one saying she was honored to visit the older relative. Is

that how it would be in your culture?

But God's spirit had touched Elizabeth as soon as she saw Mary and she understood when her baby leaped for joy in her womb. She called Mary – 'the mother of my Lord.'

And right at that moment, God's Holy Spirit filled Mary and she sang a special song of praise. Would you like to hear it?

Tammy: Mary sang: "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

For he took notice of his lowly servant girl and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me.

He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him.

His mighty arm has done marvelous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

He has brought down princes from their thrones and lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.

He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful.

For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

Carol: What an amazing song. Mary, such a young girl, was not only praising God but she was *telling forth* things that would happen in the future because her son, Jesus, would 'show mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. He would fulfill the promise God had made to her people many generations before.' And Jesus was to come to reach out to all people – in all the world...from generation to generation – even to us today!

This part of the story finishes by telling us that..(v56) 'Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.' Wouldn't you like to have heard the things they talked about together? I know I would!

Tammy: Welcome, once again – we're here together at this special time of the year – and Carol's going to tell you a little more of this true Christmas story...

Carol: Well...the Bible tells us that an angel visited Joseph too. Can you imagine how Joseph felt when he discovered that the girl he was going to marry was already pregnant?

So, one night, soon afterwards, an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream and explained about

the baby that Mary was carrying. Joseph trusted God's message and he married Mary right away. He understood that this was a very special baby – God's own son. And he and Mary were to bring him up and nurture him, from a tiny baby – to a grown man.

The Bible then tells us that because Joseph was a descendant of King David he had to travel to Bethlehem for a census. Many people were also there to be counted. Here's the next part of this true story...

(Luke 2: 6 - 17) 'While they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was nowhere else for them to stay.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the brightness of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to *all* people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a huge crowd of others angels from heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph... And *there was the baby*, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.

Tammy: Here on *Women of Hope*, our dear friend, Marli has joined us again. She's going to share some thoughts with us about Christmas. It's good to have you with us Marli...

Marli: Thank you Tammy, and Carol. And I love being here with *you* too my friend.

What does Christmas mean to you? Many people who celebrate Christmas around the world don't really know what it means. They know it's a Christian holiday. They see the people in the stores shopping. They see the bright lights on Christmas trees, they may even exchange gifts, but they really don't know what it's all about!

Carol and Tammy just told us the story of the birth of Jesus – let me tell you some more about Christmas...Christmas is a celebration of God's love. You see, Christmas is when we remember that God loved the whole world so much, that He gave His only Son to be born as a little baby. That's how much He loves you and me. He left His place in heaven to become a human being just like us. You see, this is what God's word the Bible tells us about this baby...Isaiah the prophet said these words 700 years before Jesus came to live on this earth. He said, "For a child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will be upon His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace."

Marli: *Prince of Peace*...If there's one thing the world needs today it is *peace*. Now, you can't buy peace in a grocery store, or in a pharmacy or order it from your favorite department store. Peace is a very precious thing that not many people in this world know.

At this very moment, in different parts of the world there are wars. People are killing each other in war-torn countries, people are killing each other in dark street corners of big cities, people are fighting in homes, husbands are abusing their wives and children and mothers-in-law are hurting their daughters-in-law. There is so much strife and struggle!

And then, there's a different kind of war...between people and God. People have been fighting against God since the beginning of time. Have you seen this war raging in your family, in your own conscience and in your own heart? The big question is: "How can we put an end to it?"

Carol: Oh Marli, that is so true. And that's a good question that I'm sure many people ask – how *can* we put an end to the constant struggle of life – the struggle against God?

Marli: Well...you know, this Christmas story, from God's word, the Bible, gives us the answer...

It tells us what happened the night this wonderful Prince of Peace was born... born to provide an end to this war. We heard what the angels of heaven said to the shepherds: "Glory to God in highest heaven, ^{and} *peace on earth* to those with whom God is pleased."

That's how they announced the birth of Jesus Christ. The Prince of Peace came to restore the relationship between God and people. Just think, my friend where else can we find peace? You see, when God forgives us, peace comes into our life. The old war is over...peace takes its place instead.

That's what Christmas is all about. That's why Jesus was born and that's why he is called *Prince of Peace*. Because of Him, we can have peace with God, our Creator. To live in peace with Him and with

ourselves means that we don't fear what life might bring our way. We don't have to fear the future.

Tammy: That *is* wonderful news for us all isn't it? And at Christmas, we can celebrate this wonderful *good news*.

Marli: I know that there are millions of women in this world who live in fear, day and night. They're afraid. They think that they're not good enough for the people around them, and they will never be good enough for God. The *good news* is that, the *Prince of Peace* came to take away that fear. We don't need to be afraid of God's judgement any more. If we confess our sins and accept Jesus, the marvellous Prince of Peace into our hearts, fear goes out and peace comes in! That's because the *Baby* we celebrate at Christmas is *God Himself*. Do you remember what Isaiah said his name was? Yes...he said, "His name will be called *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace!*" He can restore anyone so they are at peace with God,, at any time and in any place in this world. He *is* the mighty God...the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. *All power* belongs to Him.

Tammy: My dear friend, today your relationship with God can be totally restored. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is able to give you this wonderful gift of true peace.

Marli: We have a special reason to celebrate Christmas don't we! How about you my friend? What are you going to do about the Prince of Peace? Will you accept Him as your own Savior? Will you let Him work in your life and circumstances and restore your soul...your whole life?" Then you can celebrate Christmas as it's meant to be. Let the Prince of Peace rule over your life. He may not change all your circumstances but He will change your heart and your future. This is God's most precious gift to you!

And now I want to pray with you. Think about this wonderful Prince of Peace, and talk to Him in your heart as I pray with you.

Jesus Christ, our Prince of Peace. We come to you today, because You are our only hope. The only one who can give us true peace. I pray for each person who is living in despair, fear, anger and strife. Help her to trust you so that she can have peace with God and those around her. I pray this in that special name...Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen

Tammy: A very happy Christmas from all of us here at *Women of Hope*. Please remember to write and tell us about what special things you do at Christmas. You can contact us in care of this station or at Women of Hope.... The address: TWRWomenofhope@twr.org. That's

TWRWomenofhope@twr.org. If you have missed a program or would even like to hear one again you can do that on our website TWRWomenofHope.org that's TWRWomenofHope.org. or by visiting us on our Facebook page.

Carol: This Christmas may you celebrate our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace...Jesus Christ, the Lord.

We do hope you will be with us again. Have a Happy Christmas and a great week filled with God's blessings.

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