Karen’s Kounsel

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KLynn Counseling

 a place for new beginnings

**"For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord".** **Luke 2:11**

***Christmas.*** That word holds a world of different meanings for people. Many of those meanings are warm and joyous. For some, those meanings are cold and lonely. People of faith celebrate this holiday and those who hold no faith at all observe it with trees and presents.

I asked a young woman I knew several years ago what the original meaning of Christmas was and she was perplexed. She was truly unaware that Christmas was meant to celebrate the birth of Christ. She was not even familiar with the story of the manager, the shepherds, or the wise men, or why any of them would come to see a baby. Angels singing in the night seemed like a fairy tale to her.



God's greatest gift has been overshadowed by Black Friday sales on Thanksgiving Thursday, the latest technical gadget, and a frenzy of spending that will follow people well into the next year.

This month I would like to look at Christmas from the perspective of the story of that birth and some of the psychology I see in that life that came to be the "light of the world". After all, no one understands the intricacies of the human mind as well as the Creator Himself. One of the great benefits to us was that when He came in human form, He would feel what we felt.

 We sometimes have the mistaken impression that the people in the drama of the Biblical account are just that - a drama that is somehow removed from actual reality. But those accounts were written for us to learn from. They were real people with faults, issues, good intentions and bad ones, just as we are today.

***Family***. In one way another, it is an intricate part of Christmas. For many people it is a time when family joins together, they might even come from far distances, to share the holiday. For others it is a time when the absence of family is glaring. Old grievances seem worse. It can also be a time when we remember those who have passed on. A missing loved one can be a source of both fond memories and sad emptiness.

On that first Christmas **"Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child." Luke 2:4-5.**

Those two verses speak volumes. They went alone to a strange town. Mary did not stay in the comfort of her family home. Was the situation with her family more uncomfortable than that rugged trip? Chances are there was some family estrangement. How would you respond if your beloved, innocent teenage daughter came to you pregnant AND with a story like that? You might think she was delusional and would try sending her to someone like me for therapy or counseling. What about Joseph's family? "No dad, I didn't do anything. Yes, I'm still going to marry her". Can you see the family arguments and division? (Not sure exactly how I would have dealt with this one myself if they showed up at my office).

The story holds hope though. The little family made it through. When they were alone in that strange city, God used many different people and situations to bring help and comfort. Lowly shepherds came to tell their experience and boost their faith. Great kings brought gifts that would provide for their meager finances. And eventually Mary and Joseph did return to Nazareth and there was reconciliation with their family of some kind, because when Jesus was a boy they traveled with their whole family group to a religious holiday in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:41-45) This would probably not have happened if they still saw this family as "unclean".

If you have divisions in your family this year, find hope in the Christmas story. Difficult circumstances come to us all. There are answers and help to be found. Change is inevitable. Find ways to bring about the change you want to see. Remember that things are seldom as they appear and you may not know the whole story. Offer grace. If you are the one who is misunderstood, or if you have made the mistakes that have fueled some of the division don't lose heart. Offer humility. Grace and humility can overcome some of the largest obstacles in relationships.

***Finances***. This season has turned into a spending spree for many people. All you have to do is watch the news (now even on Thanksgiving Day itself) to see crowds trampling each other to get the best deal. It has become a frenzy that is far removed from the original meaning of Christmas. When you are having a hard time financially it can feel depressing. Others give gifts, and what you have seems poor in comparison. You see magazines with beautifully lighted and decorated homes. I remember the feeling, some years ago, when it all felt shabby and old.

**"And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the in". Luke 2:7**

Talk about shabby! Have you ever been in a barn? I spent some summers of my childhood on a farm. Hay is prickly. Floors are dirty. And unless you are shoveling continually (no, even if you do) it just plain smells! Can you imagine becoming the subject of nasty gossip, being 9 months pregnant, traveling over rugged terrain, knowing the labor pains are beginning, and then actually giving birth in a smelly, dirty, uncomfortable barn with animals trampling around making noise? I thought it was difficult in a clean comfortable hospital with nurses attending me and some pain killer to help.

The scriptures tell us that Mary **"pondered all these things in her heart"** **Luke 2:19**. Sounds poetic doesn't it? So serene and contemplative. Ladies, would some of that pondering contain some tough questions? Was it hard to hold onto faith in that moment?

Your circumstances at this Christmas season may be difficult, depleted, or even shabby. You may feel alone or estranged from someone you care about. If you are struggling with depression or discouragement this year, let your focus change course. The hype of the season is in itself empty. Look for those you can be a light to. Put your focus on THE light. That light will show you more than a holiday or the latest gift. It brings comfort in loss. It gives beauty for ashes. It lasts past this earthly time set aside for a "holiday". It shines through the centuries. That light is eternal.



**"When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy"** **Matthew 2:10**