

# Hope

Just a few weeks ago, my first grandchild was born. It is an interesting experience holding a first child or first grandchild. Beyond all the warm fuzzy kinds of emotion that accompany such an event, there is the profound awareness of the potential, of the future itself, wrapped up in such a small and frail little package.

At such moments parents and grandparents always wonder what the future will hold for this child. What will she be like? What will she accomplish in the world? How will the world be different because of her?

Zechariah and Elizabeth have a new child, a miracle baby in every sense of the word. John had been born in extraordinary circumstances. God had told Elizabeth that he would be a great man of God. As the parents no doubt doted on their newborn, they told others of the work of God beginning to unfold in the world in this newborn. And the people wondered what the future would hold for this baby.

*All who heard them pondered them and said,  
"What then will this child become?"  
For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.  
Luke 1:66*

The answer to that question unfolds across the entire book of Luke, and on into the book of Acts. In fact, the final answer to that question has not yet become apparent. The ripples of John's birth, and the birth shortly after of a cousin named Jesus, are still moving outward through human history.

Apart from all the sentimentalism and hype about the season, Christmas is about hope and possibility. It is a profound sense that the future can be, and will be, different than the present. And what better symbol for that hope, the possibilities of a new future through God, than a newborn child? Of all the ways that God could have communicated hope to us, there is probably none as powerful and clear as the birth of a child. In ways that go far beyond sentimentalism, much of the message of the Incarnation lies in the simple fact that God choose to reveal Himself in human birth.

God loved us so much that he sent His Son. And that means a new future!

~ Dennis Bratcher  
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*O Lord,*

*Help us in these next few days to lay aside the frenzy of the season. Quiet our hearts and our minds and bring your Peace. Help us once again see the world as full of hope and possibility, as full of potential as a newborn child. We confess that we cannot bring newness to our world. But you can. We know that because you already have.*

*Would you give us the strength not only to believe in that newness, but to live it in our lives?*

*Birth us again through your Spirit that we may live a life of Hope! Amen.*



## *Angels We Have Heard on High*

*Angels we have heard on high  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply  
Echoing their joyous strains.*

*Refrain:*

*Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
Which inspire your heav'nly song?*

*Refrain:*

*Come to Bethlehem and see  
Christ Whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee,  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.*

*Refrain:*

*See Him in a manger laid,  
Whom the choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,  
While our hearts in love we raise.*

*Refrain:*