

A Long Walk

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them“, Luke 2:8–20.

In this beautiful passage regarding our Lord’s Birth, we read that the shepherds are told by the angel to leave the sheep which had been entrusted into their care, and become some of the first to have knowledge of a Heavenly Gift.

It was going to be a long walk for these shepherds, for, to be obedient to the angel, it would mean leaving their sheep, and trusting that no ill-will would befall one of the flocks.

There is also another little story that has been going around for many years, and goes as follows.

One of the shepherds had taken his daughter with him that particular night. After the angelic choir had gone, the little girl asked her father what was happening. The excitement between the shepherds was just too much, and she was ignored, and left to follow along.

Reaching the manger she stood at the doorway, and looked in and to see the baby Jesus asleep.

Breaking into tears because she did not have a gift for the baby, an angel asked why she was crying. Telling the angel that she did not have a gift for the baby, the angel asked why she did not take in a white rose from the bush behind her.

Looking round, she saw a white rose bush full of flowers. Quickly picking some, she took them to the crib, where, as she laid them down, the baby Jesus opened His eyes, and smiled at her.

HAVE WE WALKED FAR ENOUGH FOR THE 'GIFT'?

For a period of some three and a half years, our Lord WALKED on this earth. The question then becomes "How far did Jesus Walk!" A study by Rev Mike Ooten is our help at this time.

During His Ministry, our Lord would have gone up to Jerusalem at least nine times, a total of 2,160 miles. It is estimated, that during our Lord's three and a half years ministry His 'walked mileage' would have been at least 3,125 miles.

Add to this the number of times Jesus would have walked with his earthly father up to Jerusalem for the Feasts, and we reach a conservative figure for our Lord's 'walking life' of about 21,525 miles.

Let us just consider the following three more 'walking' stories.

A young boy had just got his driving permit. He asked his father who was a minister if they could discuss his use of the car.

His father said to him, "I'll make a deal with you. You bring your grades up, study the Bible a little, and get your hair cut – then we'll talk about it."

A month later the boy came back and again asked his father if he could use the car. His father said, "Son, I'm really proud of you. You brought your grades up, studied the Bible well, but you didn't get your hair cut!"

The young man waited a moment and then replied, "You know Dad, I've been thinking about that. Samson had long hair, Moses had long hair, Noah had long hair, and even Jesus had long hair."

His father replied, "Yes Son, and they walked everywhere they went."

The young man above had an 'ego' problem – long hair, and in this day

and age it was probably only a short walk to the barber's shop!

Let us now consider this situation.

Two families living side by side in the mountains of Kentucky had been fighting and quarrelling for years. The feud started when Grandfather Smith's cow jumped over the stone fence of Grandfather Brown and ate his corn. Brown shot the cow. Then one of the Smith boys shot one of the Brown boys, in fact, two of them, while the Browns had shot only one of the Smiths.

Bill, the oldest of the Brown family, decided to even up matters, especially since it was his own father who had been killed. But Bill was called away to war. While he was away his mother had a hard time providing for the family.

One Christmas the head of the Smith family took his wife and children to church. Usually he stayed outside, but it was so cold he decided to go in and wait. The sermon was on Christ, the Prince of Peace. It struck Smith's heart. On his way home he passed the home of the Browns and he began to realize what a crime he had committed in killing the breadwinner. He prayed. He did more. He determined secretly to help them. He hired a small boy to carry a basket of food to the Browns every day.

When Bill came home, and heard of this kindness, he decided to find out who the generous helper was. He followed the little boy—to the door of Smith's house. He could not believe his eyes. When Smith answered his knock, he smiled and declared: "Shoot me, Bill, if you want to."

But Bill said he had come to thank him for taking care of his family while he was gone. Then Smith explained to Bill how he had come to a change of heart. He had heard the story of the first Christmas, the story of the Prince of Peace. It changed him.

One of my favourite stories is about a missionary teaching in Africa. Before Christmas, he had been telling his native students how Christians, as an expression of their joy, gave each other presents on Christ's birthday.

On Christmas morning, one of the natives brought the missionary a seashell of lustrous beauty. When asked where he had discovered such an extraordinary shell, the native said he had walked many miles to a certain bay, the only spot where such shells could be found.

"I think it was wonderful of you to travel so far to get this lovely gift for me," the teacher exclaimed.

His eyes brightening, the native replied, “Long walk, part of gift”.

The son in the first illustration was the son of a man, and to all intents and purposes, he was not a son of God

The second and third illustrations involved a son of God.

Since we are about to celebrate our Lord’s Birthday, we must also be one year older.

I started with three illustrations, and I’ll close with three questions.

HAVE WE WALKED FAR ENOUGH IN THE LAST YEAR?

HAS JESUS HAD TO WALK EXTRA MILEAGE IN THE LAST YEAR TO REMAIN CLOSE TO US?

OUR LORD ALSO TAUGHT THAT WE WERE TO GO THE EXTRA MILE – HAVE WE GONE THE FIRST MILE?

If we are prepared to be serious, we cannot deny that our Lord’s longest walk was to Calvary –

HAVE WE WALKED FAR ENOUGH FOR THE ‘GIFT’ OF ETERNAL LIFE?