

Away in a Manger



Come into the stable as Mary gently rocks the Christ-child and softly sing along: “Away in the manger, no crib for a bed...” The lullaby hums of Jesus’ humble beginnings in our world. With the song, warmth floods the otherwise stark scene...a manger where cows once fed on the hay now cushioning a vulnerable baby, the sky peeking into his sparse shelter, and His first lullaby falling on newborn ears in a stable—of *all* places. The little Lord Jesus: so fragile, so dependent, so human, so divine in such humble surroundings.

Mooring cows bring us back to reality. The baby is awake, eyes taking in this new world. Joseph shushes the cattle...and the goats...and any other animals that came to view the child in their midst. But the babe doesn’t cry. Could this be? Perhaps this lullaby refers to something more than actual tears. Jesus willingly left His home with God making His home among us, taking on our flesh—without any cry of protest or resistance. Even when life turned out to be as disruptive as a cow in the nursery, Jesus, “no crying he makes.” *Even* in the end when it got as harsh as a cross, Jesus kindly and willingly took it *all*.

...Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—Even death on a cross.
Philippians 2:5b–8 (NRSV)

The lullaby turns into our murmured prayer: “I love thee Lord Jesus, look down from the sky.” The babe on whom the stars shine now takes His place also in their midst. For: “*God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name...*” Philippians 2:9 (NRSV)

As Mary rocks the babe we long for Christ to be the one to cradle *us*: “stay by [our] side till morning is nigh.” We’ve discovered that in our world lullabies are few and hard to hear—we know darkness and loneliness. We wait for morning light to dawn in the deep darkness of night. We long for “God With Us:” “be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray.” And we can sing with *great hope* as we gaze on the God who came to live with us in great abandon. Surely this *is* love on display...

We long for Christ to “bless all the dear children,” many who face great darkness. As we gaze on the Lord Jesus’ sweet little head, we realize how—having been a vulnerable child Himself—the Lord Jesus *does indeed* know how to tenderly care for children of all ages.

We long to be transformed and to be with Christ again. “And fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.” Surely, it is Christ *alone* who can shape us for the kingdom of God. He came down *from* heaven to be in our midst, walked around in our flesh and knows most deeply what it means to have *Life*.

“Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
Hebrews 4: 14–16 (NRSV)

Sing to the Christ-child and hum that lullaby for yourself too, because Jesus Himself *has been* and *is* humming it for you. “Away in the manger...”