



# Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

In 2009, I spent the month of December in Ghana, West Africa away from my friends, my family, and my culture. The following excerpt is taken from my journal.

Monday, December 14th

Walking through the Advent season without the Christmas hype of lights and trees and commercials prompting a buyer to a sale – without sermons and songs at church pointing toward Christ’s birth – even without the cooler weather to remind my body of the time of year – and without the resources or places or people to celebrate in a familiar way – the remembrance of Jesus’ birth is more lonely and stark.

What I mean to say is that the world seems not to be taking notice – not really anyway. And I wonder about how similar that is to what happened during the month preceding Jesus’ birth. There was no preparation – obvious and flamboyant. No one really knew except Mary and Joseph, a few wise men, and all of the angels in heaven.

The “infant lowly” was born in obscurity.

Just think about Luke 2 – about the lack of room in the inn, the trough, the poverty. Think about Jesus being born to an audience of socially outcast shepherds, about their joy in being chosen, for once in their lives. Think about God’s character, that he chose Mary, the “cattle stall,” the shepherds.

“I have come that you may have life,” he says (John 10:10). There is now light, shining in darkness. Light and life broke in to the world when “no one” was looking. Just a few shepherds who “heard the story, tidings of a gospel true” that “Christ the Babe is Lord of all.”

*Lord of all?* This baby born into poverty in some dusty corner of the ancient world – this baby is *Lord of all?*

Edith M.G. Reed surprises us with her easy moves between “lowliness” and “holiness” in her hymn “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly.” And good for her for giving us a bit of a shock. We should thank her because the contrast of Christ’s simultaneous lowliness and holiness is shocking. What is more, his willingness to move from the holiness of being set on high with God the Father, to the lowliness of birth in a stable is a sacrifice that we cannot begin to understand. He was “in very nature God” but “he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6a, 7).

Be baffled...This obscure birth was chosen by the King of kings. This strange audience was chosen by the Lord of lords. This tiny baby is the God of the universe. “Christ the Babe is Lord of all, Christ the Babe is Lord of all.”

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