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A Reflection for Today: *Shepherds*

Shepherds are mentioned many times in the Bible. We read of Abraham, Moses and David all being shepherds, and Jesus is often referred to as '**The Good Shepherd**'. At the time of Jesus, during the warmer part of year, shepherds would be outdoors all the time. Each morning they would call, and the flock of sheep and goats would follow them to pasture ground where the animals could graze. The shepherds would find a pool of water or a well for them to have a drink. In the evening they would count the animals and check their health. At night the shepherds would guard the sheep and goats in open folds, or shelter the flock in a cave where they could protect them from jackals and hyenas. A howl of a hyena could panic a flock and the calm reassuring voice of a shepherd would still them. Shepherds would have worn sheepskin over their tunics. Sandals protected their feet from sharp rocks and thorns, and they wrapped their heads in a woven woollen cloth. Among the things they carried was a sling, which was used to lob stones near the straying sheep or goats to frighten them back to the flock, or to drive off prowling wild animals. *(Brenda)*

How does what the shepherds did remind us of Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

A Prayer for Today

Thank you for the privilege of working as a midwife on Christmas Eve at a maternity unit, when carol singers sang 'Away in a Manger' and the labour ward door was opened just as a baby had been born and was crying!

(Jean W)



BBC Advent Calendar Day 3



A Reflection for Today: *Star*

Christmas is ... **light**. More than the light from a new star. It's the light of God's eternal love shining through the midnight of man's despair.

(provided by Kate, from 'The Wonder of Christmas' by Derric Johnston)

Come, O prince of peace,
Calm our fears, heal our wounds, fulfil our longings.
And in the child of Bethlehem
Break down the walls that divide and hurt us.
May your **star of hope** shine bright and clear
for all who look for light this Christmas.

Wise men followed a **star** to Bethlehem to worship the Son of God. Let's have the same aim this Christmas.

A Prayer for Today

Come Lord Jesus, and let your light shine through us - so that, through our actions, we may be salt for the earth and a light in people's sight. May we reach out with your message of hope, especially those in need



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A Reflection for Today: *Gifts*

A true Christmas story. I was sitting on a bench seat in Tesco, right next to the food-bank collection point. At the far end of the store I saw an old lady, stooped with age, her hair bedraggled and unkempt, her clothes shabby. Her shoes were thin and looked more like bedroom slippers. She carried an old fashioned bag in one hand. She shuffled towards me and stopped a passing shop assistant and enquired, "Is that the food-bank?" "Yes," was the reply. She shuffled there and I wondered what foodstuffs she would take. But she slowly lifted her bag and emptied everything she had in. Without a moment's hesitation she shuffled out of the shop and was gone from sight. That old lady had come in to buy food, not for herself but for someone that was worse off than her. Yes, I will have a lovely time with my family this Christmas with lots of food to eat, but there is one person that I know who will have a richer Christmas and a place at a heavenly banquet. Jesus said about the widow's mite that she had given more than all the others as they had given out of their surplus, but she had given everything she had. **Have a happy and blessed Christmas.** *(Bill)*

A Prayer for Today

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of your son, the most precious gift, a reminder of your love for every one of us. May this warm our hearts, even in the darkest days of the year.

(Debbie)



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A Reflection for Today: *Prophecy*

One of the amazing things about the birth of Jesus is the way it fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the **Messiah** – the one who is to come. If you have ever sung Handel's *Messiah*, some of these words will be very familiar to you, and they are often read at Carol Services. A well-known passage is found in **Micah 5:8** where it tells us that the Messiah would be born in **Bethlehem** and that he came from God and existed even before he was physically born. Later, in the New Testament, the early part of John agrees with this. **Isaiah 7:14** tells of birth to a **virgin** which emphasises Jesus' sinlessness and divine origin. It also explains that he is God with us and among us and that he will show us what God the Father is like. **Isaiah 9:6-7** tells us that the child is **born for us** and will give spiritual peace now, but physical peace and his reign will be in the future, and he is described as **Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.** *(Brenda)*

A Prayer for Today

Lord, help us to be mindful of all those who are suffering for whatever reason and allow them to feel your love and peace over them.

(Jean W)

