



DAY 22

Sunday, December 23

(Candle of Peace)

ISAIAH 9:6

*“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given, and the
government will be on his
shoulders. And he will be
called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace.”*

A Son is Born

by Grace Thorne

Most people know these words, “Unto us a Son is born...”, well, by either sight or sound, from the familiar Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke’s first chapter. This Son wasn’t born just unto “us,” meaning Mary and Joseph, but also to us—meaning the world—for he was the Saviour of mankind, the Redeemer, the Messiah. The birth of a child, any child, is an exciting event. With the birth of this child, there was a special radiant star seen over the land, angels singing in the heavens and expensive gifts from traveling wise men. Christmas reminds me of another son that was born with almost that much anticipation but far less celebration.

My brother and his former wife were expecting their first child. Two weeks late and about a week before Christmas, she delivered a son, Nathan. He was almost perfect, almost. Our joy turned to sorrow very quickly. Nathan was anencephalic, meaning he was born without skull bones. During birth, his tiny brain absorbed all the impact of delivery. Though he could breathe on his own, it was felt he was incapable of even feeling pain because of the damage. The doctors told them that with unlimited funds, which they didn’t have, and the best care possible, the outcome would be the same. No heroic measures were taken, and this wisp of a boy was quietly called home a mere 23 hours after arriving.

Our family was overwhelmingly devastated, as you might expect. The day after Christmas, Mary was probably cradling her newborn son to her breast while Joseph sat by, quietly awestruck over the arrival of such a special, perfect child. Many years later at the same time, our family and others were standing in a church singing and praying while facing a small white casket. The last hymn, “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go,” still brings tears to my eyes 30-plus years later. The tiny aftershocks of that terrible heart earthquake continue even now, always at Christmas, but at other times, too.

But what of the other, perfect child?

He, too, died, though not as peacefully. His mission, like that of Nathan’s, was pre-ordained before his arrival. But before his departure, he left us with work to do, instructing: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” And how shall they be comforted? “Whatever you do to the least of these, you do it unto me,” and “offer a cup of cold water in my name,” are verses that immediately come to mind.

This holiday season, when festivities seem endless and overwhelming materialism is rampant, the indigent, aged and grieving are usually remembered. It’s the rest of the year they are easily forgotten. The homeless are just as uncomfortable in the sweltering heat of August as in frozen January. The aged are still lonely long after the decorations are put away, in nursing homes or tiny apartments. Those who grieve are around us all year long, but are sometimes swept away with a trite phrase or casual Hallmark message. Jesus didn’t come into this world just to save humankind, but through salvation to change humankind. It is our mandate to live His message and carry out His task year-round, not just when we read or hear those words, “Unto us a son is born...” at the church’s annual Christmas service, because those who mourn and need comfort are around us each and every day, waiting for that Christmas moment.

RESPOND:

DO: Determine a way in which you will comfort those who mourn as part of your weekly or monthly schedule for the new year.

PRAY: For those who are grieving, lonely, sick, or homeless (or anyone else who mourns) among us. May the peace of Christ be with them and bless them.