

The Whisper of the Almighty

God became man. Jesus Christ, one part of the triune God of the universe, gave up His privileges and humbled Himself, to take on flesh. To become human.

Books have been written about this theological truth. Words and more words have proclaimed how the King of kings came to earth as a lowly infant. We do well to pay attention. The Incarnation is the very bedrock of the Christian faith. God, rejecting all that was His by right, condescended to us. In our absolute need, He stepped into brokenness, pain, and sin and He stood by our side, in our shoes, in our place. He let go of His divine standing and lovingly embraced humanity.

Think about that. God became man. There is no human parallel, no analogy that will do that justice. We do not possess the capacity to create a story or song that will allow us to fully explain the depth of sacrifice that the Incarnation truly is.

Yet even in our meager understanding, we have caught a glimpse of the enormity of it all. The unimaginable humbling of the Son of God. Though we are unable to appreciate the totality of that great act, we know enough to realize what it means for us. Without God becoming man, we have no path back to God. The way is shut. We cannot enter. Christianity declares the truth of this. Our faith is built on it.

Sadly, it seems we frequently miss a key part of the Incarnation. Yes, we fully believe that God became man. We unreservedly accept that He gave up His throne to come to earth as a baby. Yet do we stop to think about why He had to come the way He did? Why was He born in such a lowly manner? Our theology is clear on this. He came as a servant. He came in humility to show humanity a better way. He came as the Messiah for all, not just for the rich and powerful.

I believe it is more than that though. I believe that the

manger, the animals, and the lack of worldly acknowledgment, is God's gentle whisper that the path back to Him is one of humility and condescension.

In the Old Testament story found in 1 Kings 19, God speaks to His prophet Elijah in a most unexpected way: a gentle whisper. God had previously sent a whirlwind, an earthquake, and a fire, but His voice was in none of those. He did not use the loud and impressive. Instead, He chose as intimate form of communication possible. He whispered.

God is capable of blowing us away with His words. He can speak as loudly as needed, as the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the stopping of the sun's movement clearly demonstrate. Yet he chose to whisper to us when He sent His Son. Yes, he sent His angels to announce the birth. Who did they announce the birth to? Shepherds. Lonely and solitary and insignificant shepherds. The very Son of God was born on earth as a baby and it was a gentle and intimate whisper.

We miss so much if we miss this. The incarnation was not loud, showy or impressive because the way to God is not loud, showy or impressive. The way to God is only possible when we accept the sacrifice made on our behalf in humility and a stripping off of our pride. It is not enough to accept that Jesus is God and that He gave His life to save us. We must accept that we are wholly undeserving of that sacrifice and that without it, we are forever lost. Without it, the path back to God is shut. The only way to God is on our knees, surrounded by shepherds, animals, and hay, praising the baby who is God become man. Worshiping the gentle whisper of the Almighty who is lying in a manger, who is the Savior of the world. This Christmas, let us do our best to listen carefully for that gentle whisper. It is the whisper of our salvation.

Merry Christmas from Rambling Ever On!

The Winter Journey

Day 1 – Departure.

The wind whipped with an urgency that had been absent the past few weeks. The cold worked its way through the air, seeking any exposed skin it could find. The winter had been long and surprisingly fierce, bringing with it a yardstick of snow. School had been out for what felt like months, giving the small town of Anson Cove a seemingly permanent air of celebration. As the breeze stirred a final, powerful gust, the tall traveler turned and gazed sadly at the small town that had been his home. Away in the distance, the enthusiastic voices of children ebbed and flowed in song. They were singing to him. It was their goodbye – their farewell and well wishes for his journey north. He hesitated, attempting to convince himself that he did not have to go. Pushing those thoughts aside, he put his back to the voices and began to walk.

Day 2 – A new beginning.

The first day had been hard. Every step had been a battle. He knew it was the right decision. He knew he really had no other choice. That knowledge didn't make it any easier though.

After a full day of walking, he rose early and had put many miles behind him before the sun had made its bright and happy appearance. The day had dawned golden and clear. The air was still cold, but that was no problem. In truth, he loved the cold and could have lived in this chill forever. Today would be better, he thought. He lowered the bill of his hat to shield his eyes from the wind, and plowed ahead through the mounds of snow that lay before him.

Day 6 – Music in the night.

Winter's end was imminent. He could feel the warmth working through his limbs as he made his way along the forest path. Even now, in the dead of night, the cold was less than it had been a few days ago in the full heat of the sun. His options were few. He had no choice but to press on and make it north. He had no choice but to keep going. He sang that night, trying to push away the fears and the doubts that filled his mind. His friends from Anson Cove had taught him a beautiful song, so he sang it loud. His lonely voice filling the woods with melody.

Day 14 – The harsh truth.

Winter was dead. He knew that could only mean one thing. The realization that he would not make it north filled him with a sadness so deep he struggled to keep moving. As far as his eyes could see, the snow was melting. Little green shoots of grass poked their way through the blanket of white, reaching desperately for the sun. The forest animals were busy now. They flitted and crawled, jumped and chattered in, around, and on the trees. It was everything he could do to keep moving. He felt tired and weak. His hat kept sliding down his head, moving with the moisture on his brow. This trip had taken its toll and he had lost so much weight. Desperate for rest and shade from the sun, he crawled beneath the canopy of a giant, weathered oak tree. The bark was rough against his back, but the sun did not reach him here and for that he was thankful.

Day 22 – Despair.

It was over. His trip, which had begun with so much hope and

promise, was nearing its end. He would never make it north. The last week had been the most difficult of his life. He was deathly thin and pale beyond words. His face was white; whiter than the snow that sat in small little clumps that dotted the landscape around him. The plan had been a good one: Head north. Stay ahead of the spring. He had hoped the winter would last a few weeks longer than usual, seeing how strong it had been. Instead, the seasons had changed early this year, and that had made the journey north impossibly difficult. He had never planned a trip such as this and mistakes had been made from the very beginning. His friends in Anson Cove had done all they could to encourage him. Especially the children. But it had all been in vain. These would be his final days. He knew the truth of that deep down. With a final, stubborn surge of energy, he quickened his pace.

Day 23 – The end.

He had found a small outcrop of rocks the previous night that offered a cool respite from the heat. The view from his final resting place was breathtaking. The leaves on the trees were a brighter shade of green he had ever seen. The birds, in joyful abandon, chirped out to everyone who could hear. The grass swayed playfully in the gentle southern wind. The sun, in all its life-giving glory, beamed warmth and light in every direction. If this was the end, it was as good of an ending as he could imagine. That made him smile.

His body was spent and wasting away. It would not be long now. He sensed the final moments peeking around the corner, yet he was at peace, knowing that he had been blessed with a good life. He had made so many friends during his days in Anson Cove. Those children had welcomed him into their lives completely. He was their friend. Their tears as he had said his goodbyes broke his heart yet filled him with such courage and strength. He would miss them all terribly.

He could feel the tug of death and knew he had only moments left. He chose to greet it with a song. A song he had learned from the children who were his dearest friends in the world. A song they had written about him. Summoning the last stores of willpower he possessed, he raised his head and sang with all the joy and love he could muster, "Frosty the snowman was a jolly happy soul!"

The Tree

Green tree, bright green tree,
dancing joy,
joyous seed,
resting on a lush, green sea.

The bells and bows,
the matchless lights,
shift like lightning,
sing like snow.

Tinsel twirls, bright green tree,
the dancing joy,
the joyous light,
twist and sing on the lush green sea.

Bright green tree,
we watch and wait,
watch and wow,
watch and bow,
waiting, watching the lush green sea.

The angel lauds,
glimmers,
shimmers,

simmers,
applauds and then

a pause.

500 Words or Less Reviews: Andrew Peterson, Music, and Light at the Ryman

For the second year in a row, my wife and I went to see [Andrew Peterson](#) and his amazing group of friends at the [Ryman Auditorium](#) in Nashville Tennessee. Seeing Peterson perform “Behold the Lamb of God” is a Christmas tradition for us now.

For those unfamiliar with Andrew Peterson and his Christmas show, here are a few basics: Every year, Andrew Peterson presents his “Behold the Lamb of God” tour. Every year, he invites old friends and new to perform with him. Every year, the lineup is a bit different, with new special guests and quite a few reoccurring players. “Behold the Lamb of God” is Peterson’s Christmas album, first released over ten years ago. It’s a concept album, working through the entire record of Scripture to tell the story of redemption. It’s ambitious and beautiful. I highly recommend it if you can find a copy. The show is divided in “half.” I use the word “half” loosely as the first half is a good deal longer than the second. The first half is Andrew and his guests performing some of their own material. So each year, the first half will look and sound different from every other year. No matter. It’s great music masterfully played and sung by immensely talented singers and songwriters. The second half is when Andrew and his friends perform the entirety of the

“Behold the Lamb of God” album—no breaks, no talking, no interruptions—from beginning to end. It is amazing.

For those familiar with Andrew Peterson and his Christmas show—you know. You know what it’s like. You know how it feels. You know the sights and sounds, the light and peace, the mystery and the passion. If you have been fortunate enough to experience the show for yourself, you know. It’s much more than a concert. It’s a profound and powerful time of worship. The gifted artists, with Peterson at the helm, guide us through God’s grand story of salvation. With words and melody, they walk us through the Gospel story. My meager words cannot do it justice. In fact, I am too far gone to really give you any objectivity. I love the first half of the show. Both years it has included amazing artists doing what they do best. And I love the second half, hearing the biblical narrative of grace interwoven in the Old and New Testaments. But from the moment “Labor of Love” is played, until the final “amen” is sung by the audience, I am a mess. I lack the words and the skill to say why exactly. My best guess is that the words and music and truth speak so clearly in those final songs. They speak directly to my heart, mind, and soul. I fear building it up too much, but I don’t think I could oversell it if I tried. Whatever you do, if nothing prevents you, go to this show at least once in your life. You will be better for it.