

The Stable Hand

Luke 2:7

Haul that here, Put that there. Clean this stall, pile that manure, bring in the hay, hobble those animals. There is always more work to do. Right when I think I am done and I can finally relax a bit, he's right there giving me ten more things to do. He just keeps riding me, ordering me to do this, go there, do that; its' as if I were his slave or something. But I am no slave. I am a free person. Even as a stable hand, I am still my own person. I can make my own decisions, right? Who is he to tell me what to do, when to eat, what to do, where to sleep. I matter? Right! I have value? Right! I am a man of worth? Right!

Yeah right, in my dreams, I matter to someone. But really this is all I do, this is all I will ever be – a common laborer that takes care of people's animals. Some of these animals are even treated better than me, probably because they are more valuable than me. What's my value? I shovel &#*(%(-)... stuff around all day. Haul water, Wash and clean, scrub and rake. Just to finish one day and start all over again the next, day in and day out, without hope, until I die and this all ends. That is my station in life. What more can I expect.

At least working with the animals isn't to bad, most of them don't complain unlike their owners, who always complain. At least with the animals they are content, give them a little water, some grain and bit of hay and they are happy as can be. And hey at least I get to live here to, out of the streets, out of the cold. It's not so bad really if you think about it. I got a solid roof over my head. I have dry straw to make a bed out of each night. I have the body heat of the animals even in the winter to keep me warm. And the smell, well you just get used to the smell after a while. I hardly smell it anymore unless it is a really hot day.

And my pain in the neck boss, the innkeeper, well he is not really that bad, when it comes down to it. Yeah he can be demanding, sometimes.....most times....all the time. But that is why he allows me to live here, so that anytime night or day a traveler needs assistance I am here ready to serve them. And some days he doesn't even come out here to check up on me. When it gets really crowded all he cares about is making sure the customers are happy, and as long as they are happy with their animals care then those days he lets me be. Of course, when we get so crowded that the overflow people have to stay out here in the stables, then he is on my back almost every hour checking up on things and making sure everything is fine. Now don't get me wrong this doesn't happen a lot out her in Bethlehem, but we get our crowds every once in a while. A lot of times it is pilgrims on their way to

Jerusalem for the high holy days. And when that happens, yes the innkeeper will put up people right in here the stalls pushing aside me and the animals, just to get more money from the travelers needing shelter.

Did you know that one night we even had a baby born out here in the stalls? Really, I am not joking. And no it wasn't a calf, a colt or a kid, but an actual baby boy. Really! I am serious. It happened a few years back now. Let's see now, it was before Tiberius, oh yeah, it was back when Augustus was emperor. Because he made us do that crazy census thing. As if counting people ever helped the little guy, all it does is find out where we all are and how much they can raise our taxes, but that's a whole other story. I digress, So back to my story, what was I talking about? Oh yeah the baby!

Anyway the baby was born to this young couple. As I recall this was their first. Yeah that's right I remember because the husband didn't now what to do to help. And the girl was so young, just a simple child her self, such an innocent little face she had as she felt the pains of that child birth begin. I felt sorry for them. I mean really so far from home. They were from back up North in Galilee, a town called Nazareth I think, never heard of it myself, must be even smaller then our Bethlehem. Well the man's family must have at one time or another been from Bethlehem, so as decreed by the emperor the family had to come down here to Bethlehem to be counted. And that poor girl, pregnant as she was, traveling a dangerous trip, even when health. That must have been one uncomfortable trip, long, dirty and tiring only to find out that the town was packed with travelers. That's why they ended up here with me in the stable, no room at any inn. I think they were just glad to get anyplace to lay down, especially since the woman was in the beginning stages of labor. I tried to make them as comfortable as possible. But when you are giving birth for the first time with no family or midwives around, and you are in a horse stall, well lets just say it wasn't the best.

But that baby boy was strong and healthy and the birth came about just fine. We even got some old rags that we have over here for cleaning to wrap him up in. That young mother wrapped him so carefully but she was tired I could tell. So we laid him down in a feedbox. Hey with hay that makes as good a crib as any. I mean he was comfortable and before to long he was asleep just like his mother.

I tried my best to make them comfortable. After all this is a stable. There is only so much you can do. I fetched water, and got some food from the inn for them. And after that long trip and the whole birth thing what they needed most was sleep.

Of course they didn't get much if I recall rightly. People kept coming by to check out what was happening in the stable. Even some shepherds came rushing in waking the baby up again. I mean really I am a lowly stable hand, but geez who would want to be a shepherd, they are so uncouth. They are live out in the fields for weeks on end, never clean or respectable. In my opinion that young father should have never let those smelly rude shepherds even near the Baby. I tried myself to keep them out of the stable, but they insisted, that they must see this Baby. They kept saying they must see the one who would be the Messiah. The Messiah, in the stable. That just proves these shepherds were ignorant low-lives. What would a coming messiah be doing in my stable? I mean really, but all the more they kept insisting they needed to see the baby.

You know come to think of it how did they even know there was a baby in the stable. After all most all the flocks that I know about are out in the Kidron valley miles from here. And there is no one who could have known that fast, to get over there and tell them and then to get back here so quick. Even if they did they would have had to have run the entire way. And its not like they have never seen a baby before. So how did they find out I wonder.

Maybe their story was true. I thought they were just putting us on, trying to get in to the stable, They kept babbling about some angels, some messengers of God who filled the sky, proclaiming the messiah's birth. But who listens to the shepherds?

I mean who would believe that a messiah was born here in my stable. After all, all of Israel has been awaiting this moment when the chosen one of God would be born, the one who was to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. The one who would overthrow the governments and raise the poor (like me) out of our sad daily life. Who here wouldn't want to have a messiah who comes to you and calls you by name and cares about you and loves you unconditionally, a person who knows your entire history and what you will do in the future, and sees all your sins, mistakes and pains you have caused others and yourself and he still loves you anyway, still values you and holds you as a person that matters. Who here wouldn't want to meet a messiah like that who promises you a better hope, a promised place in a kingdom that has no end. Who wouldn't want to feel safe and belong to some thing beyond this miserable life with pains, and worries, sickness and death looming around every corner. The messiah is the one who changes all that.

And according to those shepherds, if they weren't imbibing to much that night, somehow found out that this baby born miles away from where they were watching their

sheep was in fact the very Messiah we had waited hundreds of years for. God's son on earth. Who would have thought would have been born in my stable. Ummm.

And you know by know he probably is a man. That little child in my feedbox. By now he is a man. I wonder if he could be that same Jesus that I hear about that is stirring up crowds throughout Judea. I haven't gone myself, because I just have to much to do, here in this stable, moving...&%^@(*)... stuff around all day. You know we have to have priorities in life.

But then again maybe I should go see him to visit with him and hear of that promised salvation, that lifts up even the lowest of people and calls us children of God, given life everlasting, joy eternal. What a gift that would be, even me a lowly stable hand, even you in whatever you do in this life, God calls you his own and claims you as important. A person of great value, so much so that he comes to give you this kingdom everlasting. What a gift we are given. Let us go and see this gift, of the incarnate Word of God, the one who is our messiah, the one who has come to save us and make us free. Amen.