

Finding a Fresh Approach to the Story of Christmas

I'm going to pull back the curtain for a moment and reveal a secret about preachers.

We struggle every year creating Christmas sermons.



It's not that we don't want preach about this great event, but how do we tell the Christmas story without it sounding like last year's Christmas sermon ... or the one before that? And I've discovered that it is. Not. Acceptable for some people if I preach any other passage other than those tied directly to the birth of Jesus. *"We want to see Jesus in the manger."*

So we preacher-types look for a "fresh" way to talk about advent without using the same stories and the same illustrations. So as I ponder yet another way to present the truth of God coming to earth, another thought entered my head ...

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- Do you have a favorite movie? One you can't even count the number of times you've seen? You're channel surfing, and when you come across this movie, you stop and get absorbed in it. Again. (At this time of year, for many of us that movie is *It's a Wonderful Life*.)
 - Do you have a favorite book you've read more than once?
 - And then there's the family gathering or extended family reunion. You never tire hearing an aunt or uncle tell that one story about your dad that has been legendary.

Some stories capture our attention. Even more so, they capture our hearts. We've heard the story before, but we want to hear it again. So here I am, pondering a fresh way to talk about the gift of Jesus, when I remember just how much I enjoy revisiting certain movies, books, and family stories. And one story I never tire of hearing is God's plan for our salvation that includes the birth of a baby in a manger.

I don't tire of it, and I'm sure you don't either. So I realize I don't need to "dress it up" with new illustrations or new ways it applies to life. The account of God coming to earth is so rich it stands on its own merit! What a great story!

Katherine Hankey grew up in 19th century England. Her family was wealthy, but it's Katherine's spiritual wealth worth noting. She devoted her life to nursing and mission work. When she was 30, she became seriously ill. She



recovered, and it was during her recovery she set the life of Christ to poetry. She loved the story of the life of Christ, and she considered it worth retelling. Her little booklet of poetry is no longer in print, but we do remember the introduction she wrote to the booklet. You may have even sung it:

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love;
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true,
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

I love to tell the story,
'Twill be my theme in glory,
To tell the old, old story
Of Jesus and His love.

When Jesus was born, angels made a proclamation to a group of shepherds. They made the first announcement of God coming to earth as a child.

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12).

And today we still make this proclamation. We love to tell the story; After all, it's a story worth telling—and it doesn't need me to dress it up.