

STORYTELLING

the MOST AMAZING THING

After several days, they were finally nearing the town of Bethlehem. Donkey took slow, steady steps. It was a difficult journey, up and down rocky hills, but Mary never complained as she rode on Donkey's back.

"Are we close?" she asked hopefully as the sun began to set. Mary shivered against a cold wind, tugging on her heavy, woolen cloak.

"Not much longer," Joseph said.

Donkey knew that Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to be counted in a "census." Donkey had never heard of a census, but he was glad to help with the long, hard trip. Donkey loved his master, Joseph, and kind Mary who traveled with him.

A few hours later, Joseph led Donkey to a small creek on the side of the road. Donkey lapped the chilly, flowing water while Joseph unfastened the pack tied to his back. The master pulled out a few pieces of flatbread, some figs, and a bit of goat cheese.

"The baby will be coming soon," Mary said softly as she ate. Donkey lifted his head and turned toward her. Looking down, Mary gently rubbed her round belly.

Oh no, thought Donkey. We need to get to Bethlehem.

It was dark and starting to rain when they finally got to the crowded little town. Joseph searched for a place to rest, but every bed, in every room, was already taken, so they had to sleep with the animals.

An old stable on the outside of town was the only shelter they could find. Joseph helped Mary down from Donkey's back and onto a bed of hay. Donkey laid down and closed his eyes, but soon was startled by the sound of a baby crying.

Mary held a tiny baby in her arms. "Jesus has been born," she said with tears in her eyes. "Just as God said."

Joseph filled a trough with hay, carefully laying Jesus in the manger. Soon the little family was asleep. But Donkey couldn't sleep. He got up and wandered to a nearby field. Some shepherds were tending their sheep when a very bright light filled the sky.

"An angel!" one of the shepherds shouted. He pointed to a figure that looked like a man, but had a face that shone like the sun and clothes that were glistening white.

The shepherds dropped to their knees, shaking with fear. Donkey couldn't understand why they were so frightened. The angel was the most amazing thing he'd ever seen.

Then the angel spoke. "Do not be afraid. I bring good news! The Son of God, the Savior of the world, has been born tonight in Bethlehem! You will find him as a baby lying in a manger!"

A baby? Lying in a manger? thought Donkey. It must be Jesus!

Then there were thousands of angels, each as big and strong and beautiful and bright as the next.

Wow! Donkey was mesmerized. Amazing!

"Glory to God in heaven!" the angels sang over and over.

Suddenly Donkey realized that although the angels were truly magnificent, they were only shining so brightly and singing so beautifully because Jesus had been born on this very special night.

Donkey brayed with excitement as he turned and ran back to the stable. Lying down next to the manger, he gazed at Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

This, Donkey thought, is what's truly amazing.

"DO NOT BE AFRAID. I BRING GOOD NEWS! THE SON OF GOD, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD, HAS BEEN BORN TONIGHT IN BETHLEHEM!"

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