

Tomorrow is the last of the five Sundays between Thanksgiving and Christmas. How many Sundays did you spend gathered with other believers to worship the One who came to save us from our sins? How could one born in such a way change the course of the world?

I hope by now you have realized that there really is no “perfect” Christmas. Putting together the perfect celebration, the perfect choir presentation, the perfect children’s program, the perfect Christmas tree, the perfect shopping trip, the perfect Christmas present is nothing more than a myth. Because that first Christmas was hardly perfect.

Mary and Joseph were only engaged, after all. There had been no marriage ceremony, no priest to bless their union. Yet, Mary was obviously pregnant. Joseph had wanted to quietly stop the proceedings and have nothing more to do with Mary. However, an angel had appeared to Joseph and told him that the Holy Spirit was the father of the baby. So, there are Mary and Joseph, newly married and about to become parents before the ink is dry on the marriage license. Don’t you just know that the little old ladies in the village were counting the days since the wedding? I’m sure they made a lot of noise talking about this baby that was coming too soon.

Nor was there much quiet around the household of Mary’s relative, Elizabeth. Zechariah had doubted God and had been struck dumb during his wife’s pregnancy. When his son was born and he named him “John,” there was much shouting and rejoicing. I’m sure the little old ladies and more than a few others in the village couldn’t stop talking about that one, either.

Then, that night, in Bethlehem, there were people selling goods in the street, tax collectors shouting about payments due, innkeepers screaming there wasn’t a room available anywhere. Angels were singing in a mighty chorus on the hillside. Shepherds were yelling at the sheep to go this way, not that way on the way to the manger to see the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. People were asking each other, “What is going on?” “Why are those smelly shepherds bring those stinking sheep to town?” “Why is that star shining so brightly over that silly little manger?”

After the shepherds saw Jesus, they returned to the hills, praising God and giving Him glory for all the things they had seen and heard. I’m sure their praises weren’t quiet little prayers of thanks said under their breath. They had just seen with their own eyes that what they had heard the angel say with their own ears had come true in the very way the angels said it would. They weren’t afraid. They were praising God. I’m sure they weren’t very quiet in their praises, aren’t you?

No matter what the song says, it probably wasn’t much of a silent night, and it was far from perfect. Yet, it was all about a child born to set the world free. What could be more perfect than that?