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WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS

Nahum Tate, 1652-1715

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11)

In the spring of the year, the lambing season, shepherds in ancient times would sit all night beside their flocks, watching for wolves or other dangers and even feeding orphan lambs with milk on a soaked rag. No doubt this is why these shepherds were seated on the ground the night Jesus was born, for biblical scholars believe the event was actually some time in April. It would be natural for these humble men to be fearful, not only for themselves but also for their flock, when the brilliant light and the voices of the angels pierced the silent night. But with what wonder and exultation they must have heard the astounding news! Are we surprised that they forgot their duty to their flocks and hastened joyfully, though perhaps doubtfully, to see the Holy Babe in the manger with their own eyes?

This clearly written, colorful narrative of the angels’ announcement to the shepherds was written by Nahum Tate, the son of an Irish clergyman. After education at Trinity College, Dublin, he was appointed Poet Laureate of England during the reign of William and Mary. His life as a drunkard and a spendthrift resulted in degradation, however, and he died at the age of 63 in a debtor’s refuge in London, England.

No doubt the popularity of this carol has been enhanced by the tuneful melody, which has been adapted from a work by master composer George Frederick Handel.

- ♪ While shepherds watch’ed their flocks by night, all seated on the ground, the angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around, and glory shone around.
- ♪ “Fear not!” said he, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind; “glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind.”
- ♪ “To you in David’s town this day is born, of David’s line, the Savior who is Christ the Lord, and this shall be the sign;
- ♪ “The heav’nly Babe you there shall find to human view displayed, all meanly wrapt in swathing bands and in a manger laid.”
- ♪ “All glory be to God on high, and to the earth be peace: Good will henceforth from heav’n to men begin and never cease!” AMEN.

Out of gratefulness to God for the precious gift of His Son, we should be anxious to spread His peace and good will to others whenever we can. AMEN.

*Amazing Grace -366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions
by Kenneth W. Osbeck*

*“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
Matthew 28:18 – 20*

