

# Mental Health Monday—A different kind of Christmas

*While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a Son. She wrapped Him in a blanket and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn. (Luke 2:7)*

By Jewish standards it was *“picture perfect”*, produced by the Hallmark Channel! The setting was Nazareth, a town of no significance in Israel! Joseph, a twenty-something young man, a carpenter by trade, had been betrothed to Mary, a fledgling teenager. The whole deal, of course, was arranged by the fathers, though consideration had been given to the expressed feelings of the young adults. Most likely a dowry had been exchanged. Yes, it was a *“cut and dried”* business deal!

Anyway, between the legal betrothal and the public marriage ceremony Mary became pregnant. In the Jewish culture, not so good! Mary should be stoned. After all, she had proven herself to be an immoral woman! While legally married, she was obviously *“messing around”*! Joseph should have led the stoning. Instead, he decided to divorce Mary *“under the radar”*! However, an angel intervened. *“While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God’s angel spoke in the dream: ‘Joseph, son of David, don’t hesitate to get married. Mary’s pregnancy is Spirit-conceived’”* (Matthew 1:20).

Amazingly, Joseph followed the angel’s advice. As a result of their public declaration Joseph and Mary became the number one topic on social media! Nazareth was a buzz with tabloid headlines. The couple dominated Twitter ... #josephandmary. Public appearances were impossible. Fortunately, near the end of her pregnancy Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem by virtue of Caesar’s taxation decree. The trip was approximately 80 miles. Whether by foot or donkey, it was not an ideal route to

the delivery room.

Ah yes, the delivery room—a stable filled with sweaty donkeys and ... well, I'm sure you get the picture ... not exactly an antiseptic environment. And, to top it off there were no parents or grandparents to provide support and encouragement. No, the weary, young couple was alone ... with the donkeys! These are the unvarnished facts of the first Christmas! Without exaggeration it was **"A Different Kind of Christmas!"**

Perhaps that's the way Christmas is going to be for you this year—**very different!** I would not presume to fill in the details. The possibilities are myriad! However, most likely the abnormality has to do with this fact: **someone is missing!** Only **YOU** can supply the details ... perhaps with great pain!

So, please allow me to offer this perspective. The first Christmas, as opposed to what is proffered today, was **DIFFERENT**, to say the least! On that first Christmas Jesus was not at home. He left the glories of heaven. While the angels sang, the Father missed His Son. Departed from His Father's side, Jesus was to be found on earth, in a manger, a feeding trough for donkeys, helplessly crying for milk from His mother's breast!

It all sounds preposterous and very different! Yet, years later on the Cross Jesus would helplessly cry for help because He loved **YOU!** *"At noon the sky became extremely dark. The darkness lasted three hours. At three o'clock, Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "My God, My God, **why have You abandoned Me?**" (Mark 15:34). **Exceedingly DIFFERENT!***

If your Christmas is going to be different, here's a song for your consideration—