

An Unlikely Christmas

By Pastor Andy Addis

Christmas must be the most unlikely holiday to have ever come into existence. The essence of Christmas isn't about reindeer, jolly old elves, or even gift-giving; it's the celebration of the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. But how in the world did that story ever take hold?

It's the most unlikely tale.

Consider His family.

His father was a carpenter—a nobody. His mother, a young girl from a town hidden in the back hills of the rural ancient world. They had no family name, no wealth, no power, no prestige, no influence.

A baby born to such a family should have been a child of obscurity, lost to the flow of history over time.

How unlikely is it that we still celebrate His birth?

And the beginning of His story wasn't promoted by poets or politicians.

It wasn't announced as a public, newsworthy event.

Instead, shepherds—outcasts—those with no credibility or reputation were given the task of verifying His arrival and proclaiming to the world that He had come. But who would ever listen to shepherds, especially the ones working the night shift? They were only to be seen and not heard—preferably not even seen. Yet they were the ones chosen to announce His birth 2,000 years ago.

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But perhaps something greater was stirring.

Kings came from afar to see this child, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They said they had followed ancient documents and celestial signs: a star appearing at just the right time and place. You might think this was the beginning of a story destined to be remembered.

But no.

The reigning king sought to erase Him, to destroy any potential rival.

Every child in that area, born during that time, was ordered exterminated.

History was being rewritten, this child's story erased before it even began.

Yet, somehow, this small family and their son escaped that hellish attack, fleeing to Egypt for safety.

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He grew up in poverty and obscurity, becoming an itinerant preacher outside all the inner circles of power and influence. A wandering teacher with no support system, no place to lay His head, no title or position to His name.

The powers that be excluded Him, pushed Him to the fringes again and again. They made sure He wasn't heard, while they worked to maintain their own control over the people.

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And His followers? The closest to Him were a ragtag group of sketchy men—former tax collectors, political insurgents, failed fishermen.

Not one of them had ever imagined living a life of faith or following a teacher like Him. Yet He chose these twelve to walk with Him for three short years.

Not a lifetime—just three years before it all seemed to come crashing to an end.

How unlikely is it that we still celebrate His birth?

For a moment, it seemed His story might take hold. Crowds began to follow Him. His message began to resonate. But that's when the religious and political authorities conspired against Him. They sought to silence Him and destroy all He was building. Through false accusations and political lies, He was unjustly tried, savagely beaten, and executed—just like countless others. It was said that Rome lined its roads with crucified men, like you and I might see telephone poles today. And then one day, between two common thieves, He was nailed to His own cross. His life was extinguished.

How unlikely is it that we still celebrate His birth?

He was buried, unceremoniously, in an unmarked tomb—charitably donated by a man who wasn't even related to Him. His memorial service? Never held.

Instead, soldiers were stationed outside His tomb by order of the religious authorities to ensure no one could create myths or spread stories about Him.

They intended for Him to fade into history, His body decaying in the darkness.

How unlikely is it that we still celebrate His birth?

But then...

Three days later, the tomb was opened.

Light poured out. Angels descended.

And this man rose from the grave.

He was seen—alive—by friends, family, and strangers.

A crowd of 500 bore witness to His resurrection.

And then He ascended into heaven, promising that His Spirit would come.

When it did, thousands bent the knee to follow Him.
With tongues of fire and strange voices—a gift from God Himself—the message of this man turned an entire city upside down.
This child, this teacher, this man who rose from the dead must really who He said He was.
The authorities tried again to extinguish the light.
Persecution scattered His followers to the far corners of the earth.
But instead of extinguishing the light, they carried it with them.
Known as the Diaspora, the church began to spread—
city to city, country to country, continent to continent.
Today, there are approximately 2.4 billion Christians in the world.
Christianity is the world's largest religion.
And it all began with the birth of one unknown child, in a small town, in a distant land, surrounded by persecution and opposition.
A preacher.
A healer.
Yet, much more.
They sought to destroy Him, but He overcame—
even death itself.

The question is no longer how unlikely it is that we still celebrate His birth; the question is how unlikely it would be that we wouldn't.

How did this happen? How did a child of no consequence, born so long ago, make this kind of impact on the world?
Because He was no ordinary child.
His name was Jesus. And He was, and is, God with us.
So this Christmas, every time you see a tree, hear a carol, or marvel at the sparkle of lights, remember: How unlikely it is that 2000 years later we still celebrate the birth of that child.
But we do.
We celebrate because...
“Surely, this must be the Son of God.

