

EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

*There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam.
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
That crazy stable close at hand...*

*For men are homesick in their homes
And strangers under the sun
And they lay their heads in a foreign land
After the day is done...*

(From *The House of Christmas* by G.K. Chesterton)

There are those in our world who know surely what it is to be a stranger, alien in a new land, unsure of what to expect and wondering how they will live. Exiles. Nomads. Refugees from the comfortable which has become so uncomfortable that escape becomes their only option.

Most of us have never had to face that. But Chesterton is right. There is a sense in which we are all strangers in a strange land. We are created by our God to live in harmony with one another, and in a symbiotic relationship to the world. We are meant to experience 'Shalom', God's peace. But that is seldom the case for any of us.

We are strangers from one another. We are at odds with nature which is meant to support us. We are exiles in the world. Refugees who live in the poverty of spirit and hungering for a place where we can find the food that fills our souls, and the welcome that lets us know we are home.

We come to the season of Christmas already knowing the story. We have been to the manger so often that the path there seems well-worn. But such familiarity can carry with it a loss of wonder, so that the season seems less lustrous than in the past. Tainted by familiarity, it doesn't excite us, perhaps, as it should.

What might it be like to hear it for the first time? Can we remember our initial excitement when we came upon Christmas un-expecting? When it was brand new and still had the shine of something that hadn't become tarnished with age and overuse?

I invite you, in this season of preparation, to open your ears again and hear the angel song. I invite you to open your eyes again and see the scene in a different way. I invite you to regain the sense of wonder and to realize that God's grace is always amazing.

Chesterton reminds us:

*Here we have battle and blazing eyes
And chance and honor and high surprise
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun...*

Come with me again to Bethlehem. Come by a different way. See it new again.

Expect the unexpected.