



# The Senior Scene



*Love people. Know Jesus. Live Transformed.*

Volume 27

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## On Bended Knee

*...the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. Luke 2:15-16*



How often have we joyfully sung these words within the carol "Angels We Have Heard on High" – Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

When we sing these words, rarely does anyone literally kneel on bended knee while singing. But these words should describe the posture of our hearts as we approach Him. Do we bow down to behold and adore the Christ Child? The invitation to adore "on bended knee" goes back to the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah issues an invitation of salvation to all nations and invites all to acknowledge God's sovereignty – to bow down on "bended knee" (45:23).

What does it mean to come on bended knee? It means to come worshipfully and humbly, recognizing that He is worthy of our adoration. And being expectant that the One we adore will meet our hearts.

The shepherds certainly had all of this in their hearts. They were visited by heavenly messengers, and the encounter stirred them to immediate action. Luke tells us, "They went *with haste*" to Bethlehem. Some may wonder at the simple belief and precipitate action of the shepherds. Perhaps some would have thought they were naïve or gullible. But what they had seen and heard was real. They believed the message of the angels and eagerly began searching for what they had been told about. They left their home and their livelihood and all that was familiar to them to seek the Savior and to worship Him. Their hearts were ready to receive the promised Redeemer. And they found Him... just as they had been told.

They went seeking God because God first sought them. God had taken the initiative, first in sending His Son, and then in revealing the news of the divine arrival to the shepherds. The angel had spoken to them, "Fear not, behold, I bring you good news of great joy!" After this amazing proclamation, their only response was to go... and see... and adore Him.

What if the shepherds hadn't responded? What if they were too "proud" or too "smart" to go to Bethlehem. What incredible joy and salvation they would have missed out on!

In the book of Galatians (4:4-5) we read, *when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman... that we might receive adoption to sonship.* Christ's existence didn't begin that morning in Bethlehem; He was from the beginning (John 1:1). That Bethlehem morning was when God sent His Son... sent Him to do what we could not do for ourselves – be free from sin. And so, like the shepherds, we go with haste to find Him and adore Him.

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built on the site that traditionally has been identified as the site of the birth of Jesus. The main doorway of the church is so low, it's impossible to simply stroll into the church in an upright posture. You have to intentionally stoop ... bow down... bend your knee. It is a beautiful illustration of how we approach Christ. And a beautiful reminder that one day every knee will bow to Him (Philippians 2:10).

As we enter the Advent season, have we prepared our hearts to come before Him in reverence and adoration? Are we willing, like the shepherds, to walk away from our own plans and activities to seek Him?

This Christmas (and ongoing) may our heart's posture be one that comes to Him on bended knee to adore the One who first humbled Himself by coming to us as the newborn King.

*Merry Christmas*

## When God is in Charge, Don't Worry Over Your Future

I am Safwat Habashi, and my wife Pearl and I have been members of MPC since September 1968. This is a summary of the 98 years of life that God granted me thus far.

I was born in a Christian home in a small town, Baliana, in upper Egypt. While the population was and still is 98% Moslem, my father was a successful merchant with a good reputation and was respected by Moslems and Christians. The Christian community was 98% Coptic Orthodox. The Presbyterian Church was the only other Christian church in the community.

My parents and grandparents were Presbyterian who practiced their faith in and out of the home. They were devoted, born-again believers dedicated to church participation, daily family worship, and personal Bible study as a way of life. However, all I learned from them was that being a Habashi meant the culture dictated my behavior. So, I went to church and was proud to be a Christian culturally. At age thirteen my father gifted me a beautifully bound Bible and insisted that I must read the whole Bible in one year, which I did. I did not learn much during that reading.

In the summer of 1955 when I was 29 years old, I toured Europe with a group from the Church of God. On board the returning ship to Alexandria the last day, a young member of the church, Louise Franco (a convert from Judaism to Christianity who I respected and appreciated very much), took me aside and said to me. "Safwat, you are a good man, but I do not think you are a believer. You are liked and respected for your cultural behavior. But I do not think you know JESUS AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOR AND LORD." I was shocked to hear that. We did not have time to further converse.

Back home in Alexandria, I had a close relationship with a missionary from the Church of God, Rev. Ernest Lafont. I shared with him what Louise said to me. He asked me to express in my own words what born again means. I could not, other than being a church member and valuing my Christian religion in a largely Islamic environment. During the following 3 weeks Rev. Lafont spent time with me studying Scripture and praying, and I opened my eyes and heart for the first time to know JESUS AS MY SAVIOR AND LORD. From that point on I started a new chapter.

In the meantime, Pearl, who was a nurse who loved the Lord and His church, answered the call to serve at the Presbyterian Mission Hospital in Tanta. My brother, Labib, was in medical school and knew Pearl from the hospital. When Labib graduated, he invited Pearl to his graduation party where I met her. It was an interesting first day together. We went for tea in the afternoon, and Pearl said, "have you ever climbed the pyramids?" --

which I had not. And she wanted to do it... at that moment! So we did -- even though I was wearing a suit!

I didn't see her for about 3 months, and then, she came to the bank where I was working simply to deliver a message to me because my telephone service was poor. (A God-appointed meeting.) We went to dinner and for a walk on the beach. Over the next few years, we got together several times. I asked my mother what she thought about me asking Pearl to marry me. Her response -- she's too good for you!! But I proposed anyway! We needed permission from the mission she was working under, who unequivocally said, "No!" They were cautious about their single American women coming to serve and marrying an Egyptian man. Pearl wrote to her American pastor who advised her to come home for a while and see if she still felt the same and if she believed it was God's will.

In 1959 Pearl agreed to marry me. We were married on August 15 in an Egyptian-style wedding that was officiated by Rev. Lafont, although we also needed a signature of an Alexandrian minister since an American was marrying an Egyptian. At the end of the ceremony, I kissed my bride, which is traditional in America, but was unheard of in Egypt. We heard many gasps at this public kiss!

I was not permitted to leave Egypt because of my position with the bank, so we settled in Egypt. Pearl began teaching at a new UN Nursing School.

We continued praying about coming to America. I was still denied an emigration Visa because I was a bank officer. Another officer of the bank offered to write a letter stating I was a "junior employee" which would make it more likely to have my passport approved. Or I could apply for a visitor Visa and use my accumulated vacation time. I prayed and went to the emigration office. I spoke to a man who worked there who knew me because my uncle was the pastor of his church. I explained our situation, and he said, "Wait here for an hour. Don't speak to anyone else." All the time we were praying for God's will. An hour and a half later, the man returned with my passport!



At the time, Egypt was under Communist government, so before I left, I had to sign over all my property. I left the country with only \$250.

Then our faith was stretched again. If I had known what we would face when we arrived in America, I don't think I would have come -- I couldn't find a job for 2 years! But God is faithful. A friend in the Chamber of Commerce called and asked me if I was familiar with PPG. I met with the manager of the international division in December 1965. After an enjoyable conversation, he said, "I don't have a job for you!" But he took my telephone number.

*(Continued on the next page)*

On June 29, 1966, he called me and said, "I want you to start tomorrow!" There is not time to tell of the things I had to arrange in order for this to happen. But the main thing is, God answers prayer!

In 1968, we came to MPC. Dick Todd was the pastor. Two years later I became an elder. It has been my privilege to serve this church since then. I will stay here until God transplants me. I have seen God work in miraculous ways in my life. I didn't know the future, but He did. And He guided every step.



## Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne

Emily Elizabeth Steele Elliot and Timothy R. Matthews

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown,  
When Thou camest to earth for me;  
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room  
For Thy holy nativity.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,  
Proclaiming Thy royal degree;  
But of lowly birth didst Thou come to earth,  
And in great humility.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

The foxes found rest, and the birds their nest  
In the shade of the forest tree;  
But Thy couch was the sod, O Thou Son of God,  
In the deserts of Galilee.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living word  
That should set Thy people free;  
But with mocking scorn, and with crown of thorn,  
They bore Thee to Calvary.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

When the heavens shall ring, and the angels sing,  
At Thy coming to victory,  
Let Thy voice call me home, saying "Yet there is room,  
There is room at My side for thee."

My heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus,  
When Thou comest and callest for me.

The lyrics for this hymn were written by Emily Elizabeth Steele Elliott in 1864. She was the daughter of an Anglican clergyman and the niece to Charlotte Elliott, the author of the hymn, "Just as I Am." Friends remembered Emily as a woman of compassion, who gave herself to rescue missions and Sunday School work and cared for the sick and dying.

Emily published 48 hymns in a book called *Under the Pillow*, which was especially for those who were sick. "*Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne*" was published separately. She wrote it especially for children. The music was written in 1876 by Timothy R Matthews, an English clergyman who composed more than 100 hymn tunes and was recognized as one of the leading organists of his day. The song was first sung by the choir in her father's parish.



Although the text of the first stanza takes its theme from Luke 2:7, "there was no room for them in the inn," unlike many Christmas carols, this one does not trace other details of the nativity story.

Instead, the verses tell of the humility of our Lord in His life.

The first four stanzas contrast the splendor of heaven to the poverty and lowliness of Jesus' life on earth. The refrain contrasts that while there was no room at the inn, there is room in the heart of the singer. Then the final stanza rejoices that when we make room for Christ in our hearts while we are on earth, there will be room for us in heaven. Like many hymns of the season, the first coming of Christ also points to the Second Coming. Even though this hymn most often appears in the Advent section of the hymnal, it could be sung in any season. Her text places the Nativity within the broader narrative of Christ's life.

*"...Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God...made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant...."* (Philippians 2:5-7)

The song emphasizes the sacrifices that Jesus made to become our Savior. There was no room for Him, and so His birth was a lowly and humble one. He didn't even own a place to lay His head. He was mocked and scorned at Calvary. But He will come again someday in victory.

This Christmas season, remember that you have an eternal home, because in amazing grace, Jesus was willing to leave his home for you.



**2nd Thursday**  
No luncheon in January -  
see you in February!



Welcome to Winter - The leftover letters reveal this month's Scripture

S	B	L	A	N	K	E	T	W	G	O	L	E	L	U	Y	H	E	S
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O	S	C	H	O	I	R	H	O	A	D	L	A	E	F	T	O	E	T
W	H	S	W	E	A	T	E	R	O	E	M	C	A	N	W	D	W	H
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X	X	P	O	I	N	S	E	T	T	I	A	X	L	E	S	N	I	T

ADVENT

BELLS

BLANKET

BLIZZARD

BOOTS

CANDLES

CANDYCANE

CAROLS

CHOIR

CHRISTMAS

CINNAMON

COAT

COLD

COOKIES

EARMUFFS

EGG NOG

FAMILY

FIREPLACE

FLEECE

FLORIDA

FROST

HOT CHOCOLATE

ICICLE

IGLOO

JINGLE BELLS

MARSHMALLOWS

MISTLETOE

MITTENS

NATIVITY

NEW YEAR

NUTCRACKER

PARKA

POINSETTIA

QUILT

REINDEER

RESOLUTIONS

SCARF

SHOVEL

SLEDDING

SLEIGH

SNOW ANGEL

SNOW PLOW

SNOWFLAKES

SNOWMAN

SWEATER

TINSEL

TOBOGGAN

WREATH

YULELOG

