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Thought for
the weak



with the Rev Preben
Andersen

SHEPHERD 1: I was always the first to arrive there in the fields by Bethlehem to look after the flocks – and now look at me.

Shepherd 2: And I was always the last, never late, but always the last – and now look at me.

Shepherd 1: Dressed up like pixies and left on these shelves in the basement of the old curiosity shop until Christmas.

Shepherd 2: Yes, not much of a life is it? When you think of everything we've been through – and especially what happened on that night in Bethlehem.

Shepherd 1: Yes, that night, when the star suddenly stopped in the sky and the angels came.

Shepherd 2: Yes, the angels. I shall never forget them.

Shepherd 1: But why is it then that now – 2,000 years later – we are hidden away for 11 months of the year, and then, for one month, dug out of the basement and dressed up in red frocks and white beards?

Shepherd 2: Beats me. Might it have something to do with bringing cheer?

Hoping to see the smiles on the young ones faces when they enter the shop and perhaps see us sitting here, and us hoping someone will buy us.

Shepherd 1: And better still, buy both of us – together – so that we do not get separated, but can continue to remember what we saw that night.

Shepherd 2: Together.

Shepherd 1: Yes, together.

Shepherd 2: I was always the last minute one, and it drove you barmy. But I was never late.

Shepherd 1: Yes, and I was always far too early for everything, and you swore one day you would get me late for something...but you never really told me what.

Anyway, never mind, it's Christmas again, and here we sit for we can do nothing else. No one bought us last year.

Shepherd 2: No, nor the year before that. Nor ever.

No one seems to care much anymore about the Christmas message.

Maybe they do not understand?

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SHEPHERD 1: But how can they? No one saw what we saw. No one heard what we heard. We saw the star, and heard the angels singing, and then, and then, we saw the Babe in the Crib, and all the animals saw him too. They too were overcome by it all. I mean, have you ever heard Donkey being so quiet – before or since?

SHEPHERD 2: Now you mention it, no. I don't think I have. It was a special moment in time. And all thanks to that little baby.

SHEPHERD 1: The greatest thing is that although I was always the last to arrive and at the back of the queue, any queue, that little family in that stable cared for me just as much as they cared for you. They made no difference between anyone. Everybody welcomed, all invited.

SHEPHERD 2: Yes, even a group of smelly shepherds – watching over their flock at night.

SHEPHERD 1: And now, here we sit – for we can do nothing else.

SHEPHERD 2: Nothing else at all. Unless somebody decides to buy us – together. Then we can bring cheer to that home, together. For we have a story to tell...

SHEPHERD 1: Look, the toys are going well, and the sweets. Lots of people, young and old, milling about the shop buying silly things, things that are bad for you, things that do not even last.

And they don't even spare us a glance...

SHEPHERD 2: Perhaps it's because we are now sitting up here so high? Not in the basement any more. You can only see us if you look up, if you raise your eyes...

SHEPHERD 1: Just like we did when we saw those angels coming down...

SHEPHERD 2: Although when we came to the Crib. We did not have to look up at all, only down, at that Babe. It was as if he invited us all to come just as we are, however we felt, and I know that I for one did not feel I had any right to be anywhere near him...

SHEPHERD 1: Nor did I...

Scroll down to Part 3

SHEPHERD 2: But he was and he is the Lord of all, the Lord of the poor especially, the Lord of the least, even the First and the Last among the shepherds...

SHEPHERD 1: Wait a minute...there's someone coming...a mum with her two small children...they are looking up...they've seen us...perhaps...

SHEPHERD 2: Don't get too excited. She does not look as if she can string two coins together. Look, she is looking in her purse and shaking her head at the same time...

SHEPHERD 1: Yes, I guess just one of us is too expensive for her...?

SHEPHERD 2: But look, there's the shopkeeper... perhaps she wants them out. Poor people have no room in an old curiosity shop at Christmas I guess... or at any other time?

SHEPHERD 1: Ah, well, that's it then for another year. Not many shopping days left. And we're still sitting here...

SHEPHERD 2: But wait... look... we're coming down! We're being taken to the till. Could it be...?

SHEPHERD 1: And listen to the mum. "Thank you," she say. "These are the only characters my kids have ever wanted. The First and the Last they called them when they saw them here last year. But I could not afford them then, and I never thought I could afford them. It's only because you let me have them together and two for the price of one. Thank you so much!"

SHEPHERD 2: Now listen to the shopkeeper. "No problem," she says, "all I want for them is to find a good home, and you look like just the right family. I shall miss these two rascals but I think they have a story to tell! Have a wonderful Christmas."

SHEPHERD 1: This could be our best Christmas ever.

SHEPHERD 2: It not only could be, it will be. This is our chance to share the good news with others too.

SHEPHERD 1 AND SHEPHERD 2: The good news of Jesus. We know, for we were there! This really is for the First and the Last, and for everybody else in between, forever.

Rev Preben Andersen