

Between the Stable and the Inn

By Doug Irving & Gary Randolph



Theme and Purpose

For many of us the word "inn" evokes images of a cozy bed-and-breakfast where we slow down, relax, and free ourselves of day-to-day worries. That would not be the case for the innkeeper of those quaint B-and-Bs, who has to clean, cook, make beds, etc. With that in mind, we invite you into the experience of the innkeeper of the Christmas story - stressed, harried, and perhaps ultimately haunted by events that happened nearly under his nose but of which he was not really a part.

It is an experience that in our busy twenty-first century lives we find all too familiar. Many of us celebrate our Christmases somewhere on the path between the stable and the inn - somewhere between the place where we long to just worship and the place where we work, do Christmas shopping, and cook for holiday meals. Sometimes the preparation for even church Christmas musicals and special events robs us of the opportunity to truly come before the manger.

This is essentially the Mary and Martha story, with Mary off-stage amazed by the grace she has seen and Martha on-stage over-worked and full of regrets. This Christmas, we pray you will take a breath, forget the inn for a while, and just come to stable.

Cast list	Innkeeper - could be a man or a woman.
Approximate Running Time	3 min.
Scene Description	The inn where Christ was born on the morning after the shepherds visit
Prop List	Broom (as old fashioned as possible)
Other Production Notes	None
Related Scriptures	Luke 2:4-7; Luke 10:41-42
Song Suggestions	All Is Well; Welcome to Our World; O Little Town of Bethlehem

Innkeeper enters, sweeping. He pauses before beginning.

Innkeeper :

Dawn was still some time away. I had risen early to prepare the inn for all my guests. I rekindled the fire. I swept. I kneaded the dough and started the bread baking. I was just going down to milk the cow when I saw a group of shepherds emerging from the cave where I kept the livestock.

They were talking excitedly as they came up the path. As they swept past me I started to ask them what they were doing on my property when the first greeted me with "God bless you." Another enthused, "Isn't it wonderful?" A third, "Good News!" The group was nearly past me, and I hadn't gotten in a word. I grabbed the last one by the arm and turned him around. He stared at me bewildered.

"What were you doing in my stable?"

"That cave is yours?" he asked. "Then, sir, you are truly blessed by God."

Before I could ask what he meant, he was chattering about an angel, a heavenly choir, a baby born in Bethlehem. I had placed a couple in the stable when the inn had filled up. The woman had been so pregnant, but what could I do? There had been so many people. Had she given birth in the night? Did this child have some heavenly significance? Why was this the first I had heard of it?

There we stood on the path between the stable and the inn - him barely containing his excitement - me exhausted and confused. Him telling about a quiet evening feeding the flocks at the very time I had been feeding my many guests and catering to all their demands. An angel appearing to him in the crystal night sky while I washed dishes and cleaned up. Him rushing out to find the child at about the time I finally dropped into bed.

"I have to catch up with the others," he concluded as he rushed off, though I could see they had not gotten far. Two of his companions were talking with a group of my guests in front of the inn. I could see other shepherds greeting people in the street, seeming to tell the story over and over.

I turned and continued with my chores. In the stable I milked the cow, watching out of the corner of my eye the sleeping mother and baby with the husband watching over them. The baby lay in the manger, so I threw the sheep feed on the ground and returned to the inn.

While I served breakfast, I overheard guests talking about the shepherd's report. Some were saying they were going down to the stable after they ate to see this thing for themselves. I longed to join them. But I had so much to do.

Fade to black

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