

A Strange and Unsettling Visit
Advent 5
By Deb Brubaker

It was a day that began like any other. I got up with the sun, awakened by its light and the sounds of doves cooing in the eaves. I fetched water from the well and started a fire, then gathered Jesus from his bed as Joseph came in from checking the goats. After breakfast, Jesus and Joseph headed for the workshop, where that dear son of mine will spend the morning playing with wood chips that fall from the workbench and trying to use the little hammer that Joseph has made for him. It is such a joy to watch little Jesus' two-year-old hands copying the movements of his earthly father's.

That evening, a commotion arose in the village. There was shouting and hailing of visitors; a large caravan - camels, donkeys, servants and men of wealth - arrived in the center square. I thought at first that perhaps they were lost, or in need of water. But then three men lowered themselves from the camels and approached our rabbi, explaining about a star that they were following that had led them to this place - to our Bethlehem. They were looking for a king - a king for the Jewish people. And they believed that king - a child - was here.

My heart dropped and my stomach lurched. My hands broke out in a sweat. For I knew that their search had been successful - they had found the son of God, the future king. But he is also my son! He is so small, so lovely, so much a part of me! How can I share him with the world? Can't I just be a mother and love my child and watch him grow, without needing to worry about what will come next? Is the story already beginning to unfold, so soon?

I had given Jesus his nighttime bath, but hadn't put him to bed yet, so I scooped him up from where he was playing on the floor with the cat and carried him to our front door. There, the rabbi led the three men to meet us. They were followed by servants carrying large chests. When the three men saw us, they dropped to their knees and bent their foreheads to the ground, in reverent worship of this beautiful child who is a gift from God like no other. It was then that my heart grew warm as I accepted the knowledge of God's unceasing affirmation and care for His Son, and for us who nurture this precious life that will change the world - that is already causing it to shift on its axis.

The three rich men gave us extravagant gifts - gold, myrrh, and frankincense. I don't know how we will use them, but I do know that they are gifts from God that will be needed in the future. I shall put them in a safe place and tend them carefully, just as I will continue to do with the life of this incredible child that God has entrusted to us.