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The "Suddenly" of Christmas

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Suddenly: immediately, instantly, straight away, all at once, abruptly, swiftly.

We've all had a "suddenly" experience. Haven't we? The gust of wind suddenly blows leaves from a tree. A friend suddenly appears at the front door. The road suddenly curves to the left.

A Bicyclist in Black

One rainy night while driving in downtown Portland a bicyclist dressed in black suddenly appeared in front of my car. I didn't see him. Cindy screamed. I hit the brakes just in time.

One Outside Bethlehem

A suddenly moment arrives unannounced and unexpected. It interrupts a routine. Like the one outside of Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. In Luke 2:8-14 (NASB) we read:

"There were shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord *suddenly* stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' And *suddenly* there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'"

The Bottom of the Food Chain

In ancient Israel shepherds lived at the bottom of the food chain along with prostitutes and tax collectors. Nobody expected them to receive an invitation to visit a newborn king. Anymore than anyone expected young David, who shepherded his sheep on the same hilltop, to become king of Israel.

The Same Glory

On a winter night, while their flock slept, an angel of the Lord *suddenly* stood before the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They didn't just see an angel, they saw the glory of God. The same glory that led the Israelites at night in the wilderness. The same glory that Moses saw on the mountain. The same glory the nation saw in a cloud. The same glory that appeared in the house of the Lord. The same glory that appeared as a star and led the Magi to Jesus.

But their *suddenly* experience wasn't over. Luke told us "suddenly" an angelic choir appeared praising God and declaring peace to men who please God.

The shepherds hustled to Bethlehem where they witnessed the newborn king--as the angel had told them. And then, "The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them" (Luke 2:20).

I pray this Christmas you have a "suddenly" moment with God and the newborn King. As you contemplate that thought, remember "suddenly" moments are unexpected and interrupt the routine.