



Key Notes

MANGER DANGER

Beware! There's danger in the manger.

A feeding trough is not the kind of place a mother would choose to place her baby. Normally made of wood or possibly stone, a manger was a box in which feed for farm animals was placed. It would be discolored by cow saliva and littered with clumps of inedible fodder and animal hair. Germs! Bacteria! The barn would be drafty and cold and smell of cow dung, urine and sweat. The air would be filled with dust and dirt. What must Mary have thought as she laid her newborn baby in such a crib? *Is he safe? Will he be OK?*

We are uncomfortable with this picture and so we work to tidy things up. We domesticate the animals and disinfect the feeding trough. We clean up the manure and spray air freshener throughout the barn. We eliminate the spider webs in the corners. If the Messiah is going to be born in a barn, we'll make sure that at least it's clean!

All the nativity scenes I see during the Christmas season have one thing in common: they've been sanitized. The cute little stable is neat and tidy. The straw is fresh and clean. The animals look like household pets. The shepherds are washed and their robes look like they were recently bought at Macy's Department Store. A plastic baby who never cries or needs his diaper changed completes the picture. We prefer it this way.

But beware! There's another danger in the manger. I'm talking about the spiritual harm that comes to anyone who tries to disinfect his coming. If you eliminate the filth and pollution into which Jesus was born, you change the very Gospel he came to proclaim. To pretend the barn was anything other than a smelly, germ-infested shed is to misunderstand his coming. Jesus came into our filth so that he could save us from it!

So put away your Lysol, air freshener and bug spray. The dirt and germs in the manger are an essential part of the story. Jesus is a real Savior who saves real people from real sin in a real world. Stop pretending. If you don't let him in to the muck and mire of your world, then he won't be able to pull you out!

You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

Pastor Stan
Psalm 40:2