

WAS IT RAINING IN BETHLEHEM?

We West Coast dwellers have been pounded this season with howling winds, crashing waves and driving rain. I'm not really whining – and even if I was, I doubt that there'd be much sympathy from friends who have their own weather challenges. Wind, rain and white-capped oceans are as much a part of living here as snow, numbing temperatures and driving blizzards are for prairie folk. (Since I began writing this piece, though, we've also become recipients of a bit of snow and that's set some folks to lamenting the cold. I admit I have little to no compassion for such moaning.)

I wonder what the hills around Bethlehem were like on that night Christ was born? Although the event most likely took place in the springtime, there's no guarantee that the weather was great then, either. I wonder if the shepherds were bundled up against the night or if they'd sought shelter from the rain. I'm only speculating but I often wonder such things. I do know one thing for sure, though: The important issue is that He came, not the circumstances into which He was born.

While the indisputable beauty of Christmas lights set against the backdrop of a winter wonderland thrills me every time I see it, there is nothing lovely about the cold, black scenes of unrest and conflict in our world. Everyday the media exposes us to a glimpse of the havoc caused by the emotional, physical, spiritual and political storms that rage around the world; every day I am reminded of how much our world needs to experience a fresh infusion of the glory of the manger.

"And there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields....Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy."

Glory!