

Friends

It only seems like yesterday that we were starting 2024 and I was wondering if it would go as quickly as 2023 had done. (Answer - absolutely!) So now here we are about to start the last ten days of the year, with 2025 on the horizon and no let up to the speed with which time is flying.

I wonder how long it felt to Mary though as she carried her unexpected baby from March, through the long summer to the final moments of birth. We dismiss that whole experience in a few words of the angel's pronouncement, the great song of the Magnificat, and the dream that made Joseph change his mind about quietly putting her aside. What a long year that must have felt as she dealt with the changes in her body and in her expectations. At some point, surely, she married Joseph, or why would he have been allowed/expected to take her with him to Bethlehem, the place where he had been born. And so, seated on a donkey, they set off on the final leg of what has been for her a nine-month journey.

There are people who are donkey-deniers. They maintain that there was no donkey in the Biblical record, and of course, they are right. However, it would have been a four-day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem averaging a 2.5 mile an hour pace for roughly eight hours a day. No woman who has ever been pregnant thinks Mary did that in her 40th week on foot!

There they are then, ending a forty-week journey with a four-day walk/ride and ending up in a place they scarcely know. In terms of distance, that would be like us travelling to the White Cliffs of Dover, Lulworth Cove, Dorchester, Glastonbury, Bristol, Wolverhampton or Birmingham. With modern travel options, these are easily achievable in half a day, and yet we are unlikely to be familiar with any of them. How much harder then for Mary and Joseph who must now try to find somewhere to stay without the benefit of Trip Advisor, Google Maps or even a telephone directory.

I wonder how we would have managed? I wonder how those who find themselves in similar situations today are managing?

I wonder what we might do, or contribute or pray for with these wonderings in mind?

God bless

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