

## Precious Moments in the Calving Pasture

It is one o'clock in the morning. There is no manmade sound to be heard, only an occasional lowing or a cough of a heifer somewhere in the calving pasture. In the distant south pasture, I hear a calf bawling and its mama calling out to it to let it know where she is and that she is on her way. I cannot see them, but I hear other heifers close to me stand up from their rest and moan as they stretch to get the blood flowing again. The chill of fall is in the air and there is a gentle breeze, just cool enough to be comfortable in my sweatshirt. There is complete darkness, just enough moonlight to help me see the shape of the heifer that is giving birth to her first calf. We bred her nine months ago, and if all goes well, the calf we have been waiting for is just moments from taking its first breath.

It has been over an hour and a half now, and I am getting anxious, restless and a little sleepy after a long day and now into the second day without sleep. What will it be, a bull or a heifer? Will it be twins again like the cow that calved yesterday? Is it positioned correctly and is she making progress in the delivery? Occasionally, I turn on my flashlight and give her a quick look to see if I can get a glimpse of the front hoofs letting me know that a leg is not turned back and that the calf is not breach.

As I impatiently wait, I look upward and am completely awestruck by the beauty of thousands of stars that fill the sky. Some large, some small, some bright, some dim, some that are in obvious formations and others that just seem to be there just to be beautiful. I live out in the country where the stars are almost always visible, but I seldom take time to be still, to get away from the artificial lights and other distractions, and just gaze at them. The stars are visible in all their beauty most every night, but most of the time I forget that they are there.

As I gaze at the magnificence of the heavens, enjoy the coolness of the coming fall season, and anticipate the birth of the new calf, I am reminded of how great our creator God must be. Psalm 19 says: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into the earth, their words into the ends of the world." Every person in the world has just to look at creation to know that God exists. Creation itself speaks to our being and tells us that God exists. Perhaps that is why there has never been a culture or a tribe recorded in history that did not worship some god or know that there is a power greater than themselves that is worthy of their worship and praise! Our responsibility as Christians is to tell them who this Higher Power is and how they can know Him through the life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus.

As I continue to wait, I think about how miraculous the conception, development, calving process and maternal instincts really are. What a magnificent God He must be to just speak all this into existence and it all work just as He decided. The Angus heifer will give birth to an Angus calf. It will be black just like its parents, and it will have all the characteristics that

make a cow distinct from all the other species. Within minutes it will have the desire and the instinct to stand up on its own clumsy legs and will begin rooting and hunching on the underside of its dam. In just a few more minutes, it will find the teat and feed on the valuable colostrum that will satisfy its hunger and provide it with the required antibodies, minerals and immunities that it needs to survive. Somehow the calf knows that to find the teat, the top side of its nose has to be touching the underside of its mother.

The heifer, having never been a mother before, will immediately get up after giving birth, spin around to where the new calf lies trying to take its first breath. She will vigorously lick the calf to clean it up, to encourage it to breath and to get the blood circulating to all the limbs and organs. She will lick in an upward motion as if to encourage the calf to stand. She will softly moo to the calf showing her affection and bonding with the calf with her voice, just as we talk, sing or hum to our own babies. As a result, the calf will always know her voice from all the other mamas in the herd. As she tends to the needs of her new baby, she automatically becomes its protector. She will not run away when threats approach her baby, but will stand her ground and risk her own life to protect it.

As the calf begins to try to nurse, it will almost inevitably try to find dinner between its mama's front legs. The cow will position herself or position the calf to the proper location to her rear. As soon as the calf gets its mouth near the teats, the mama will begin to lick the calf's backside, somehow signaling that the calf needs to stay where it is. It is indeed a miraculous process that could only be designed by an all knowing Creator.

As I marvel at God's creation in the birth of a calf and the heavens, I see His love, His goodness, His power, and His greatness. I feel complete peace, joy and hope in knowing that the same God who created and set all these stars in place, also created me, cares for me, has a specific plan for my life, knows everything about me—even the number of hairs on my head (Matthew 10:30). "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:3-5)

As insignificant as we may feel in light of all His creation, He chooses to love us and have an intimate relationship with us. His love is not a casual love, but is unconditional, undeserved and unending. God loves us so much that He gave His life for us through the life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus. How can we not love Him?

Take time to look up and look around. As you see God's handiwork, worship Him, thank Him and allow Him to be the Lord of your life. He made it all for your benefit and to point you and draw you to Himself.