

## The Empty Manger

<b>Billy</b>	( <i>upset</i> ) Hey Dad, you'll never guess what I saw, today!
<b>Dad</b>	I don't know. What? No, let me guess. A sleigh with eight tiny reindeer?
<b>Billy</b>	Nope. Guess again. You won't believe it.
<b>Dad</b>	Santa himself?
<b>Billy</b>	No way. Guess again.
<b>Dad</b>	I don't know...the Grinch?
<b>Billy</b>	No. Come on, Dad. Try harder.
<b>Dad</b>	I have no idea. What did you see? You look so worried.
<b>Billy</b>	An empty manger!
<b>Dad</b>	A power ranger?
<b>Billy</b>	No. An empty manger. Somebody stole Jesus!
<b>Dad</b>	Stole... ( <i>double take</i> ) STOLE JESUS!?
<b>Billy</b>	Yeah. He's GONE. ( <i>whimpers</i> ) He won't be here for His birthday, after all. They have taken him away.
<b>Dad</b>	Wait a minute. Let me get this straight. Who stole Jesus?
<b>Billy</b>	I don't know. There's a bunch of other statues, but no Jesus one.
<b>Dad</b>	Oh, you mean the Nativity scene that stands out in front of our church?
<b>Billy</b>	Yes! It has Mary and Joseph and the shepherds and the angels and the Three Kings and the animals, but NO JESUS! Just an empty manger!
<b>Dad</b>	That's the way it's supposed to be during Advent.
<b>Billy</b>	Are you sure?
<b>Dad</b>	Sure I'm sure. That's the way it's supposed to be. During Advent we look at the empty manger and wait and hope
<b>Billy</b>	Wait a minute. You mean it's supposed to be empty like that?

<b>Dad</b>	Yes! It's not Christmas, yet! We're still waiting for Jesus to be born!
<b>Billy</b>	But I thought Jesus WAS born, a long time ago!
<b>Dad</b>	Yes, that's true, actually.
<b>Billy</b>	Okay, now I'm totally confused.
<b>Dad</b>	Think of it this way; Jesus was born over 2,000 years ago, but every time you let Him into your heart, it's as if your heart were an empty manger, welcoming the Baby Jesus to come and warm it up.
<b>Billy</b>	You're funny, Dad.
<b>Dad</b>	I'm serious! Jesus brings His love to our hearts when we let Him in.
<b>Billy</b>	Is it the love that warms us up?
<b>Dad</b>	Yes. Jesus brings love to our empty hearts, like little mangers waiting to hold Him and cuddle him.
<b>Billy</b>	That's funny. But cool.
<b>Dad</b>	Cooler than a power ranger?
<b>Billy</b>	Way cooler.
<b>Dad</b>	Right on, son.
<b>Billy</b>	Right on, Daddio.

The End