

A decade or two ago there was a popular song on the radio that asked the question, what if God was one of us? Can you imagine? What if the all-knowing God who knows you so well that he has even the hairs on your head counted was just some stranger on the bus? What if the Great Judge who brings his wrath on the proud but upholds the weak and the downtrodden was some guy walking along the sidewalk? What if the Great Maker of all that is, who even created the sensations we know as hot and cold, was some person outside hugging their coat just trying to stay warm.

The song really struck at this impossibility that so great a person as God could be contained in so small a person as a human being. But I think the song writer may have understood that despite its impossibility, it is a reality.

This is the very fact that we celebrate on Christmas morning. The infinite God became a human. Today, we again marvel at what that means. God went to every length so that he might bring salvation to you, to me, and to the whole world. By the incarnation, God has made Salvation that the Whole World Can See.

Let's take a few moments to again marvel at this fact that God became man. I am again struck by the miracle as God has blessed me with my second son, born just yesterday. As my wife and I reflected on the curious way that God created for children to be born into the world, we were reminded that God himself was born into this world in this same way. As my wife and I have been so thankful for the clean hospital rooms, for the talented and so very helpful and knowledgeable nurses ready to help us in any way they can, we were reminded of how Mary and Joseph experienced the birth of the One True God in a dirty, stinky stable, all alone.

Holding my new son, it's impossible to miss how simple his life seems right now. At this point, he mostly just cares about eating, sleeping, and feeling comfortable, but the way he cries it seems even these seem difficult for him. He does not yet fully understand his arm and leg movements. His eyes do not yet have the focus to really understand what he is looking at. He is quite helpless.

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Now just think about that child, and remember that God lowered himself to be born as one of us. The God who is intimately familiar not only with the most intricate matters of relationships, global politics, economies, the sharing of ideas, and these, but God also knows so clearly the spiritual warfare that is going on all over the world, things that we fail to even acknowledge. And God put his intimate understanding on the shelf for a time that he might be born as a child who struggles for simple eating, sleeping, and feeling comfortable. He became a baby whose eyes did not yet have focus and who did not understand everything yet that he saw.

The God who powerfully created all that exists with just the word of his mouth, the God who still preserves this world by that same power; the only reason that rocks fall to the ground when I drop them is because God uses his power to maintain the law of gravity. The only reason that the sun rises every morning and sets every night is because God is maintaining the stars and the planets in their orbits. The only reason that you and I are breathing right now is because God is sustaining our lungs by that same power. And this God put that power aside for a time to be born as a child who didn't quite grasp his arm and leg movements right away. He became a baby who was quite helpless without the care of his mother and father.

This is the curious miracle of the Incarnation. The God who created even time, the God who exists outside of our experience of past, present, and future, was born in time. If your brain is starting to hurt right now, I apologize, but that's just what the miracle of Christmas, the miracle of the Incarnation means.

But looking again at our sermon text for today from Isaiah 52, Isaiah does not look at the miracle of the incarnation as a brain-twister. Instead, Isaiah pictures it as the arrival of longed-for good news. God becoming man, mysterious and incredible as it is, means for us peace, it means good news, and it means salvation.

I recently spoke to a man who said that he did not believe that God was controlling the world. He believed that God's creation of the world was similar to man's creation of a watch. He believed that God set up the world to work a certain

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way, wound it up, and then let it go, assuming the mechanisms in place would keep the world turning.

It became clear to me that the man held this belief because he did not want to believe that God was working in this world where there is so much evil, so much pain. How can anyone talk of a loving God who allows children to die of horrible diseases? How can anyone say that God loves us when he constantly sends disaster after disaster to people who are already suffering from poverty, illness, and other things? How can anyone say that God loves us when he forces all of us to eventually lose our dearest loved ones to death?

He's got a point, doesn't he? The careful observer of the world must come to the conclusion that mankind is at war against God and God at war against us, and mankind certainly is losing. The claim that God loves us seems completely invalid.

But see how things change at the miracle of the incarnation? If God hated us so, why does he leave behind his glory, his honor, his power to become one of us? If God were truly bent on our destruction, why would he take our place and bear our sins so that he could open heaven for us? Isaiah rightly views the incarnation as good news. Through this miracle God has proved once and for all that he certainly does love us.

Even at the darkest moments in my life, I can look at the fact that God became man and ask myself, why would God go to the extent of taking my place, only so that I might suffer in the world for no reason? Why would God share my humanity only to leave me alone to suffer my own humanity? Why would God as man bear my sins, take them to the cross, and die for them, only to let me suffer their guilt and bear them to an eternity in hell?

He wouldn't. No, the very fact that God became a man means that God truly does love us. The incarnation means that God is determined to bring us salvation!

From our new testament lesson in Hebrews chapter 1 we saw how the

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incarnation means that we are no longer bound to wait for the cryptic words of prophets and angels to find truth, but instead we can live according to the clear words of God himself, God who became flesh. Even among apologists today, those who defend the faith against people who try to disprove Christianity, one of their most effective points is simply, "What about Jesus?"

The very fact that Jesus exists in history is proof that our faith is not built on myths and fairy tales but is built on real history. How does one explain a human history that contains Jesus Christ and Christianity without the truths of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, without the truths of forgiveness of our sins, life, and salvation? This is the good news that Isaiah foresaw in the incarnation.

Dear friends, in Christ, so much more could be said, but for now let us conclude here, by the simple wish of a Merry Christmas to you. It is Merry, because you and I do not have to ask, "What if God was one of us?" Instead, we can marvel at the good news that God became one of us. The incarnation is good news. It is peace. It means your God reigns. And it is Salvation the Whole World Can See. Amen.