

The Nativity of the Lord December 25, 2020

This has been a difficult and stressful year for so many of us. It has been particularly painful because the pandemic has kept us away from our loved ones. So many of us have not been able to spend time with our family, children, and grandchildren. Thankfully, we have technology to help us keep in touch and even see each other. But it is not the same. Seeing our loved ones on a screen is not the same as seeing them in person. We miss being able to hug them, hold their hands, kiss them, and have them near.

We feel it especially keenly this Christmas when we cannot be with so many of our family members. Many of us are also mourning loved ones who died this year whether it was because of the pandemic or for other reasons. Not being able to console one another in person makes that grief even more intense.

If there is one thing this pandemic has taught us, it is the value of relationships, the value of being together in person, the value of touch. This pandemic also gives us some insight into the real meaning of Christmas.

In today's society, many people view God as a being who keeps His distance from us. If they believe He even exists at all, they see Him as a private being, minding His own business, in a Heaven far removed from the concerns of Earth. We cannot reach Him and He has no real interest in reaching us. That pretty much sums up how our secular society views God.

This is not at all how the Bible reveals God to us. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a God of relationship. He certainly works with great power throughout the universe, but His love is for humans. In fact, everything He does He does out of love for us. Not just humanity in general - but concrete, real human persons. Namely, everything He does, He does for you and for me.

He is not a God who waits for people to call out to Him. Rather, He is always reaching out to us, calling out to us, trying to get our attention. He is not a God who keeps His distance from us. Just as we find it painful to be distant from the ones we love, so God finds it painful to be distant from us. He wants to be in intimate and loving contact with us and He feels hurt when we miss His call.

That is the meaning of Christmas. God became man in Jesus Christ. God could no longer bear the distance between us and Him. He wanted to break that barrier by becoming one of us.

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In Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem, we see God Himself. Everything we can say about Jesus we can say about God. And everything we can say about God, we can say about Jesus. Whoever sees Jesus, sees God. Whoever hears Jesus, hears God. Whoever touches Jesus, touches God. God did all this because He wanted to be close to us, His people.

The baby born in Bethlehem this day is God speaking to us, God reaching us, God telling us clearly that He loves us, that He is not a God who wants to keep His distance but a Father who wants to love us and be involved.

Wouldn't you do anything to be able to spend time with your loved ones again? God did just that. He did the impossible by becoming man in Jesus Christ so that He could be near us. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

People who have a relationship with the Father through Jesus do not share the world's view of God as distant and disinterested. They see God at work in their lives every day. They sense Him sustaining them in their difficulties, providing for them in their need, and comforting them in their sorrow. They sense God calling them to serve others, to forgive when it seems impossible, and to reach out to the needy. They trust that God is in control when things seem out of control and they feel certain that He will bring good out of whatever evil they see in the world. They have faith that the God who loved them enough to become flesh in Jesus Christ will do everything else for them besides.

This is what God wants for all of us - to be in a loving relationship with Him. This Christmas reveals to us that God will go to any length to reveal His love for us and to make that friendship with Him possible.

If God seems distant and disinterested to us, maybe it is because we are the ones who have been keeping our distance. Maybe we are the ones who have been disinterested in Him. All it takes for us is to open our hearts to Him and let Him in. It is as simple as praying, "As you were born this day in Bethlehem, Lord Jesus, be born in my heart today." That is one prayer that you can be sure Jesus will answer.

God became flesh so that we might become children of God. Jesus approaches us in the most vulnerable way possible - as a baby. Will you give Him room when so much of the world has pushed Him away? Will you welcome Him into your heart and into your home today? Will you stop keeping your distance and discover what it means to touch God?