



December 24, 2019

Family Service

5:00PM

Pre-service Music

9:30PM

Candlelight Service

10:00PM

At Christmastime, presence is so much more important than presents! And that's the beauty of the Christmas story. In ancient times, when our ancestors gazed at the skies and pondered the hard questions of life, when they were confronted with the mysteries of birth, and death, and illness, and wonder, they found their best comfort not in tales of

conquest and glory, nor in lofty wisdom and rituals, but in a simple tale of divine presence: A disgraced pregnant maiden, a dreaming carpenter, an lowly barnyard birth, and the earthy, simple claim that God is with us; God is among us; God is not far off where we couldn't reach, but around us and within us. The message of Christmas is that God does not remain in remote majesty and splendor, but becomes present in all human struggle, sharing our embarrassments, and outrage, and shame. God is present in all our laughter, and love, and in the satisfaction of a job well done. God with us! In that same old story, the angel names the child "Jesus," which means "God saves." And how does God save? By coming to us, being among us, walking beside us and then commissioning us to go and do likewise.



There still aren't many sure answers to the hard questions of life: when a nation stands bitterly divided, when the doctor's news is bad, when the telephone rings in the middle of the night, when someone you love is angry, or bored, or scared, and you don't know why. We have no easy answers at times like these. But we can do what God does in Jesus; we can show up in the flesh. There is a living presence that will not leave us or forsake us, come what may in the years ahead. There is a living presence that might just turn up on your doorstep with a casserole, for that's one thing it means when we say that God comes to us in the flesh. It's called "incarnation," this belief that God's presence somehow flooded Jesus' humanity, giving us a glimpse of a human life filled with the holy. This is really what Christmas all comes down to: this belief that God enters into all the shame, and the blame, and the messiness of a beautiful and broken world. God is not far, but near. And we are called to be the same, getting our hands dirty, suffering with those who suffer, accompanying with the lonely.

Incarnation means reaching out in love to the disadvantaged, the sick, the aged, the very young, the helpless, and the hopeless, the anxious, the sad, perhaps even the least powerful of all, the animals God created but who get no vote, the world with its forests, and its plant life, and its oceans! Stand with them, for this is how God stands with humanity in Christ. Merry Christmas to you!

Journeying with you,

Pr. Travis M. Fisher-King