

Considering God becoming Human

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. It's nice to see you. Thank you for having me back. Thanks, Gerald, as well for your introduction there. You really set me up just perfectly in that introduction.
- I don't know how you did that. Or maybe it was a God thing. But I'm very grateful to you. Today is the third Sunday of Advent. It is the Sunday of joy. It's also Shepherd's Sunday. Not that that's relevant to what I'm going to say at all. I just kind of like to flag these things up. We're going to read from Colossians chapter 2. Just a few verses starting from verse 8 this morning.
- I want to speak to you this morning about the incarnation. It's coming up for Christmas and there's no better subject, I think, than to speak about the incredible miracle of the birth of Jesus. God made flesh. So read from Colossians 2 starting at verse 8. Watch out that nobody uses philosophy and hollow trickery to take you captive. These are in line with human tradition and with the elements of the world, not with the Messiah. In him you see all the full measure of divinity has taken up bodily residence. What's more, you are fulfilled in him since he's the head of all rule and authority. In him indeed you were circumcised with a special new type of circumcision. It isn't something that human hands can do. It is the Messiah's version of circumcision. And it happens when you put off the body of flesh, when you're buried with him in baptism and indeed also raised with him through faith in the power of the God who raised him from the dead.
- Amen. The incarnation is the true miracle of Christmas. As we wait for Christmas day, in this time of Advent, this time of waiting and of preparation.
- Waiting is difficult. I sometimes find waiting to be difficult. When I was a child, Christmases were at least ten years apart. And now they come around like every six months or something. I worry that Christians feel like Christmas has somehow been hijacked. That amongst the mulled wine and tinsel, it's somehow lost its meaning.
- [3 : 0 6] There are campaigns that I see about keeping Christ in Christmas and that Jesus is the reason for the season. I worry that we get a little bit scared that somehow the world is encroaching on our Advent time.
- I've heard other Christians say that Jesus' death on the cross is the true meaning of Christmas. And that we shouldn't separate these two events. But I do get a bit frustrated when Christians want to charge towards Calvary when we ought to stop at Bethlehem a while and ponder the magnitude of the claims of Christmas. Because I think it's enough for us today to consider the manger, to consider the Christ child, the promised one, the Messiah, born of a woman in flesh, and blood. Think about that claim. Because it's key to the foundation of our faith. It's quite unique among the religions of the world. This claim that the fullness of God dwells in the physical body of Jesus, in his flesh and blood, that God should become human. The creator of the universe, the omnipotent, omniscient, almighty God, found in the form of a tiny baby boy, vulnerable, completely reliant on his mother, so insignificant. Think of that. God crying because he's hungry. God crying because he needs changed.
- God asleep in his mother's arms. God insignificant. This is huge. This is remarkable. It is miraculous and it is history changing. What an audacious and incredible claim that we make as Christians when we celebrate Christmas. That God should become man.

God didn't need to become man. Why? Why? Why is it important? Why is it necessary? Those are the questions I want to answer this morning. God didn't need to become human to know what it's like to be human. Although in the person of Jesus, he experienced everything that was common to humanity in those 30 or so years. God didn't need to experience that so that he knew us. He did it so that we might know him. I love that. That really excites me. That really exercises me.

That's what God does in answer to the big questions of humanity. God is suffering. Where is God in the midst of human suffering and our experience of hardship. He is right there with us.

[6 : 33] God present in it with us. We can trust that because he was human. We can trust that because he knew suffering himself.

He understands. He understands. Not for his sake, but for ours. So that we know that we can relate to this God. We know that he sees us and understands us. Sin and guilt. What do we do about our sin and our guilt?

He became a sin offering for us that we might know forgiveness and dispense with the burden of guilt. God did that in his humanity. Relationships. The question that we have, how do we build good, healthy relationships?

Jesus taught us the true way of relationships, of loving and serving one another. His example is the perfect example of true humanity.

Jesus is the perfect human. God became human so that we could know him. So we're in this time of waiting, this time of Advent. But it's not a passive waiting. It's active waiting.

[7 : 54] It's a time of preparation. The King is coming. So we need to get prepared. How do we do that? We pray in anticipation. We put Jesus at the heart of our festivities.

We prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus with food and gifts and we make it a holy day, a holiday. There's nothing wrong with celebrating with tinsel and turkey and gifts. It's all good.

And I like that there's a cultural significance to Christmas. For those who are not yet Christians, Christmas still has some meaning.

Charity, love, family, peace, thankfulness, goodwill to all. These are good things. We ought not to resent them.

Even if they don't give enough regard to the person of Jesus. We should treat that as an opportunity and not as a threat. That opportunity is what Paul is talking about in the passage that I read.

[9 : 04] The opportunity to put Jesus at the center of things. A savior is for life, not just for Christmas. Be careful, he says, not to be taken captive by the philosophy of the world, by hollow trickery.

As Christians, we know there is more to Christmas than food and gifts. Verse 8 says, watch out that nobody uses philosophy and hollow trickery to take you captive.

These are in line with human tradition and with the elements of the world, not with the Messiah. There was perhaps for some of us a time when that was all that Christmas meant to us.

But now we know Jesus. We know the incredible truth at the heart of the nativity. That the baby in the manger is the Messiah.

The savior of humanity. Messiah means anointed. And it relates Jesus to King David. The baby is the one who will bring a new kingdom in the line and nature of David's kingdom.

[10 : 15] He'll bring restoration. Not only of the idea of the Jewish kingdom, but he will restore the world and usher in a new period in the history of humanity.

The kingdom of God. Verse 9. In him, you see all the measure of divinity has taken up bodily residence.

That verse is perhaps the clearest example in all of Paul's writing of the divinity of Jesus. He is fully God.

He's not simply a man, although he is. He's not a man remarkably full of God, although he is also that. He's not human with a godly nature or a special spiritual aspect to him.

He's not a human who somehow ascended to the measure of the divine. He is God. He is born fully God. He was and is the bodily form taken by God himself.

[11 : 22] God in all his fullness. He's not a demigod. He's not half divine and half human. He doesn't have a human body and a divine spirit or mind.

He can only be understood as the human being who embodies or incarnates the fullness of divinity. And this is what separates, I believe, one of the things that separates the Christian faith from all others.

And it wasn't just Paul who said this about Jesus. Jesus himself claimed his own divinity. I'm not going to go into all of that this morning.

That's for another day, you know, a sound series on that. But Jesus claimed to be God. He used God's name to describe himself. He called himself the I Am.

He exclaimed, sorry, he claimed to be able to forgive sins. He exercised authority over the physical world. There are many examples and reasons that demonstrate that Jesus knew he was God.

[12 : 26] Even when he prayed to his father, even in his human frailty and death, Jesus remained fully God. Verse 10. What's more, you are fulfilled in him since he's the head of all rule and authority.

The incarnation does what the law and religious practice fails to do. Those things, the old ways, the old covenant are limited.

Because the law can only convict us of our sin. It can't address the sin nature within us. Galatians 3 and verse 23 says, Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law.

Locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. In Christ then, because of the incarnation, we find fulfillment.

[13 : 45] We find wholeness and meaning in our lives. We have purpose. We know our value. The true meaning of Christmas isn't Jesus' death, but his life.

To make him your Lord. To be his follower. To be a disciple of his. To submit to his headship in your life. That's the purpose of the Christian.

And in return, he makes us co-heirs to his kingdom. Paul goes on to unpack that idea in verse 11. The law, specifically in the case that he mentions with regard to circumcision.

Paul here is addressing by some of the Jewish leaders of the time. That Gentile followers of Jesus had to be circumcised to fully. We don't need these outward signs of belonging to Christ.

Because Christ has made it possible to belong to him alone. Jesus. Fully God, in union with God, becomes flesh.

[14 : 51] Same as God. He laid aside some of the attributes of God. This is called, found in human form and flesh and blood. There are some attributes of God's character and nature that he deliberately, human, kenosis.

Read about this in Philippians 2. It says that in the incarnation, nothing. It wasn't his nature to be nothing, but he made himself human. He laid aside some of them.

Jesus, sorry, omnipresence to start with. Omnipresence. Jesus was obviously not everywhere but with his disciples. He went missing. Quite often, actually, Jesus seems to go missing.

We know famously as us are continually losing track of him. We never know where he is. Jesus was not omniscient. He would have known everything. He learned as a human being learns.

Actually learned. Like in Jesus, trained to be a rabbi like every other rabbi. He wouldn't have been called rabbi. That was something that you had to earn.

[15 : 56] That standing in your community. And Jesus was called rabbi because he was recognized. Assume that. I mean, I'm guessing he might have had a slight advantage in the exams. But he would be a rabbi.

When the woman who was healed by touching his cloak did that, he asked, who touched me? He said in relation to his returning that he didn't know when it would be. Only the father knew. So he didn't know everything.

He wasn't omniscient. God's self-sufficiency. Jesus needed to eat and to rest. He got tired and he got hungry.

He set aside infinitude. Jesus was not infinite in the flesh. Bound by the dimensions and physical laws of the universe.

By time and constraint. He set these things aside and other things to become flesh. Even so, his deity. He remained fully God even to his death.

[16 : 57] There are incredible events. There are reasons why Jesus was fully human and fully divine.

We cannot save ourselves. Only God can save us. However, since humanity has the fall. Reparation has to come from humanity.

It must be a man who makes, who ransoms and redeems. It's in the incarnation that healing between man and God. Jesus' sacrifice is perfect and sufficient.

God saved humanity. Sacrifice. It needed to be someone who was human. God fully human and fully. Hebrews 2 and 17 says, That's why he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way.

A faithful and trustworthy high priest in God's presence to make atonement for the sins of the people.

[17 : 58] That God becomes for us the value of humanity. It demonstrates that God cares for us.

That some way like God ought to love us because he's God. He affirms that humanity is worth saving. God affirms that humanity is worth saving.

He asserts again then that his creation is good. That God made you just as you are. And that you are inherently good. That who you are, you are made in God's image.

You carry the spark of the divine within you. Day. It's good to be affirmed. In this time of Advent. This time of waiting and preparation for you.

You are valued. Loved. That you're wanted. In the incarnation, the Father demonstrates that he affirmed. We don't strive to win favor with God.

[18 : 58] His grace is sufficient of that grace. God wants us. God wants us to be with him. To come to him. Relationship.

To be in relationship with him. He wants us. God identifies with us. In our humanity. In becoming flesh.

God enters into humanity. In particular, God enters into our weakness. And our suffering. We know that God understands. It's important for us to hear.

And to grasp. I believe. You might be struggling right now. God knows. God cares. I believe this is really relevant. To our church at this time. I believe it's very helpful to us.

God knows. God gets it. God is with you in it. It's not that God needed to become human. To understand what humanity goes through. He didn't need to become human.

[19 : 54] To have empathy with us. But we needed him to be human. That he understands. We needed God in the person of Jesus. Because then we can know that God knows.

There is no experience. That we go through. That Jesus didn't go through. The tears. The laughter. Jesus experienced those things.

Incarnation. Leads us to respond. In our adoration of God. In worship. Emmanuel. God with us. The message of Christmas.

Is incarnation. And it's our natural response. To turn to adoration. To worship. That we can do. But. I want to say that the incarnation.

In a very real sense. Is not. That's obviously true. Incarnation literally means. Made flesh. But in another sense. God is. Who's presenced himself.

[20 : 57] Alongside humanity. Since the very start. Of creation. The whole story. Of God. Reaching out to humanity. Offering. Offering. Offering. In another sense. Of humanity. Offering relationship.

As we need to. They'll try to find ways. Of reconciling. With fallen humanity. Prophets. And kings. And discipline. Over and over. And through it all. God reaches out.

And says. You are my people. And see God. In the garden of Eden. Present with Adam. And then. Tragically. Are there four more tragic words.

In the whole of scripture. Than Adam. Where are you? The God of Noah. And Abel. A God who intervened. And who was present. So it's not.

For me. A big jump. To Jesus. God has always been present. The incarnation was always. The fulfillment. Of. In the history. Of that story.

[21 : 56] The story. Of God. And man. And it is complete. Presencing himself. With us. Is complete. In Christ. There is nothing more. We're not waiting.

For. The only thing we're waiting for. Now. Is the fulfillment. Of all these things. When Jesus returns. So all that needs to. Is our response. To these events.

How do we react. To the incredible. History. Do we leave Jesus. As a baby. In the manger. Do we leave that.

As a nightmare story. Warm. And comforting to us. Or do we offer. Our adoration. Along with the shepherds. Gloria. In excelsis.

Deo. Glory to God. In the highest. Do we. Fear. Do we enter. In. To that. Covenant. Of baptism. With him.

[22 : 53] To his authority. And follow him. Do we. Make ourselves. Disciples. Of Jesus. Jesus. Will you.

Put your faith. In Jesus. Today. And see your life. Reconciled. To the God. Who loves you. And wants you.

To the God. Who made himself. Human. So that you might know. Father God. I am. Amazed. When I think on.

The events. That first Christmas. The events. When you. Became flesh. And blood. Found in the person of Jesus.

Our Lord. That we might be reconciled. To you. Father God. I pray that this Christmas time. We would just take time. To the glory. That's found.

[23 : 51] In those. Humble. Places. The humble setting. Of the manger. Lord. I pray that we would. This Christmas time. Know. Come to know you.

As Lord and Savior. That we'd recognize. How much we. Are you. And wanted by you. That we'd recognize. That in your humanity. You relate to us.

And we can. Lord God. I pray you would open our eyes. And our hearts. To know the truth. Of who we are. And I pray. That we would have the courage. To turn that around.

Into adoration. And worship. To pray. To sing. In your name. To your glory. Lord. I pray. That you would receive.

Our adoration. And our worship. In your name. Amen. We're going to stand. To sing again. Faithful. It's a great old.

[24 : 49] Advent. Carol. Come. Come. O come.

O come. All ye. Faith and triumphant. O come now. O come now. To heaven.

Come and behold him. For the. O come. Let us. Adore him. The glory.

Oh come. Let us. Adore him. Rise. The Lord. Our true God.

Guide of Hawaiian. Eternal. Praise of left. We're going to the world. Sovereign.

[25 : 44] Be ■■■■, Not clutter. O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Lord.

Sing like the angels' station, Sing with the citizens of heaven.

Glory to God, glory to him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Rise, Lord, as Lord we greet you, for that happy morning, Jesus, to you be, Lord.

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Rise, Lord.

Amen. Amen. A diction from Ephesians 3. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations.

[27 : 21] Amen. Thanks, folks, for coming this morning. Just a wee plug again for tonight, 6 o'clock tonight. Carol's and lesson service, but it's not really lessons, it's just from one verse.

Just going to go through and cars along with that. So I just encourage you to come out at 6 o'clock tonight and be part of that. Thank you. Thank you.