



Breathtakingly Normal – Touchpoint for December 21, 2022

Luke 2:8-12 (MSG) *“There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God’s angel stood among them and God’s glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David’s town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”*

Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

“This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket...”

It is rather normal when you think about it. A child is born. A baby. It wasn’t the first time a baby had been born. It wasn’t the last time either. Humanity would not exist if babies weren’t continually born. Children – babies – are essential to the survival of the species. Always have been, always will be.

It is rather normal, when you think about it. Is that why 60% of the new testament authors don’t mention it? Paul makes no mention of the birth. Neither do Mark or John. Only Matthew and Luke think it is important enough to bring up.

It is all... so normal.

I wonder if that is why we dress this season up so much. To get us out of our normalcy. I wonder if this is why we dress this season up so much, because we have a hard time believing God is present in the normal, the day-to-day.

Many people expect the transition from this world to the Kingdom of God to occur through an apocalypse, accompanied by great and dramatic cosmic displays. This is why the book of Revelation is so popular. Great drama, great spectacle. Think of the *Left Behind* book series. How popular do you think it would be if it started with “Another baby was born”?

Christmas is such a down-to-earth story. We, along with Matthew and Luke, may dress it up with out-of-this-world events, but at its heart, at its core, it is a rather normal story... a rather everyday event. And all the wondrous, other-worldly goings on are not to take us out of our everyday normal lives, but to drive us back into them. To see the divine as being present and active in the everyday, the normal.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” is how John’s gospel put it. Here and now, in every sunrise and sunset. In every person you meet. The PRESENCE is present.

Now I know what some of you are thinking: This birth is different. This birth is unique. But is it?

When God first created, first birthed humanity in the Garden of Eden, God took a bunch of mud, a bunch of earth and formed it together. But it was only after God breathed God’s breath, God’s WORD into that mud, that earth, that humanity was birthed. In the creation story, the breath of God, the WORD of God takes on flesh for the first time.

John’s gospel speaks to this as well: *“Everything was created through the WORD. Not one thing came into being without the WORD.”*

Think again of the creation story, where it continually states, “God said. God spoke. God WORDED.”

And so the WORD has been in and through creation from the beginning. God and humanity, God and creation, cannot be separated.

In the Christmas event, we see it in its purest form. Jesus as “Son of God.” God becoming flesh. Jesus as “Son of Man.” Humanity as the home of God.

It is a particular event, meant to point to the greater actual. It is a singular event, meant to open our eyes to a continual reality.

It’s like when you say “I love you” to somebody. That isn’t the only moment that you love them. No, you say it because you want them to see that every moment that takes place between the two of you is filled with your love for them. Or at least, that is your hope.

And so, if we only see the Christmas message as applying to one day out of the year, or one moment in time over 2,000 years ago, we miss out on so much. And minimize and trivialize its importance.

This is what St. Paul is referring to when he says, “*Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.*” And then goes on to list all kinds of things including “*all of creation.*”

God and creation are inseparable. It has been that way since the beginning of time. And will be until the end of time. And even after that.

Chapter 2 of John’s gospel compares this ‘Word becoming flesh’ to a wedding feast. The marriage of God and humanity. And jars of water for ‘purification’ are changed into jars of wine for ‘celebration.’ You see, not even your impurity can separate you from God. So be changed from trying to become pure so God will be with you, and be changed into celebrating that God has already wedded Godself to you and this world.

“This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket...”

So many people expect the transition from this world to the Kingdom of God to occur through an apocalypse, accompanied by great and dramatic cosmic displays.

But it is all so normal, so ordinary. This is the central claim of our faith. The Kingdom of God is experienced and occurs in the here and now. In the flesh of creation. In the ordinary and everyday.

Thích Nhất Hạnh once wrote:

“The miracle is not to walk on water, or in the air, or on burning charcoal. The miracle is to walk on earth. You breathe in, you become aware of the fact you are alive. You are alive and you are walking on this beautiful planet. The greatest miracle of all is to be alive.”

The miracle is to see the divine, not just in this baby Jesus, but in all babies and all of creation.

Including this bread and drink we are about to share.

There is nothing more ordinary than bread. It is a staple of life in every culture and every place and time. And every culture has their wine, their drink. They are the essentials for life and sustenance. And they are the residing places of the divine Mystery. This is what we proclaim in Holy Communion as well as Christmas: God’s presence in the everyday.

And so my prayer for you this Christmas is that you will see that the Christ, the divine Mystery, is born – and borne – in each and every one of you. In each and every element of creation. In each and every day.

“This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket...”

So many people expect the transition from this world to the Kingdom of God to occur through an apocalypse, accompanied by great and dramatic cosmic displays.

But it is all so ordinary, so normal.

And that is what makes it so breathtaking.

Merry Christmas!

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert
Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taize Choir)
Be Still, know that I am God

Prepare the Way

(Taize)

Prepare the way of the Lord. And all the people will see the salvation of our God.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

My Soul Proclaims

(Marty Haugen)

My soul proclaims your greatness O God, and my spirit rejoices in you.

- 1) My being proclaims the greatness of God. My spirit finds joy in my savior. For you regard me in my lowliness and every age shall call me blest.
- 2) Great and mighty are you, O holy One, strong is your kindness evermore. How you favor the weak and lowly ones. Humbling the proud of heart.
- 3) You have cast down the mighty from their thrones. Raising up those of low degree. You have filled the hungry with wondrous things and sent the rich empty away.

The Meal

Our Father (The Lord's Prayer)

(The London Fox Taize Choir)

Benediction

Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel

(Salt of the Sound)

O, Come, O, Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel. That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.