

# Christmas Morning

Rev'd Peter Balabanski

Christmas Morning 2025 – Isa 62 6-12, Ps 97, Titus 3 4-8, Lk 2 8-20

Once upon a time, the Maker of the universe came among us as the first-born child of an unmarried teenager, and God took no special precautions for a safe arrival.

Why? Well, it seems that God just wanted to be with us on our own terms; you can't really be *with* people if you set yourself apart. That would have made Jesus something like a tourist in an air-conditioned bus who doesn't bother getting out; just waves at us through tinted windows as the bus roars off to the next attraction. But God didn't want to just look at us; God wanted to be with us – Emmanuel. So, once upon a time, the God of the universe became one of us – a newborn child.

If a great ruler needed shelter and hospitality from us and asked for it, didn't order us to give it – that'd feel strange, wouldn't it; that ruler and us – on equal terms. But that's what God has done for us; the Maker of the universe came among us as a newborn child, needing shelter, needing food, and not too much later, even needing to flee persecution as a refugee. By coming as a baby, God changed *us* somehow; called us to care for God – to learn how to be more like God – *givers* of love and care. God's need; God's vulnerability; God's helplessness – they call something from us which can heal the world's ills far more wonderfully than power can.

Power is one of those perennial concerns we plague ourselves with. With all the problems in the world Jesus was born into, we wonder why didn't he come as a super-hero and stop all wars, end social injustice and wipe away the evils of hatred, dishonesty, greed, poverty and illness? Wouldn't that have been better?

I don't think it would. It's hard to argue why, but essentially, it's best demonstrated in the story of the life of Jesus. Once upon a time, the Maker of the universe became one of us – a newborn child. God is born, grows up, and lives an ordinary life like ours; works, eats and sleeps. God takes the time needed to win our trust. God starts doing this in the baby we honour today; Jesus.

You can trust a baby. We can deal with someone who's just like we are; we know where they've come from. We don't feel threatened; we don't think they'll ask for more than they need, or think too little of us if we fall short. This is what God did for us; God took the time and embodied the shape needed to earn our trust. And because of that, when Jesus grew up and started telling us about the Kingdom of Heaven, we could get what he meant because Jesus spoke in a language that emerged from human experience. Think of his parables; Jesus spoke our language.

When Jesus healed and forgave people, he scandalised those in power – and also many of us who prefer to see 'real justice' done. (We probably mean revenge). But slowly, gently, Jesus taught us God's way of healing, accepting, life-giving justice, peace and mercy. And we accept it from him because we know him; we can trust him. We can see the depth of his commitment to us. So in this baby, we are invited to see who God is. Jesus comes gently to open up channels of empathy with us that don't threaten us. In Jesus, God models love and commitment and understanding and acceptance and everything else we need to become more fully human ourselves – everything we need to live lives of emotional and spiritual wholeness.

Jesus the Christ Child has done this; called on us to look out the real resources of our humanity; to be there for each other just like we'd do for anyone we'd known as a baby – ready with our compassion, our care, and our wish to nurture.

God offers to form us anew through Jesus; the baby of

Bethlehem. In Jesus, God is one of us so trust and understanding can be complete. We'll let him touch us; we'll listen when he tells us there's a world beyond our own perspectives; beyond our pride and fear and guilt and loneliness. It's called the Kingdom of Heaven.

So when once upon a time, the Maker of the universe came among us as a child, needing shelter, needing food, and soon, even needing to flee persecution as a refugee, God offered a new us. God our shepherd somehow lifted us from dwelling on our battles and our fears and weaknesses, and called us to be shepherds too. At Christmas, God calls up our capacity for transforming love from deep within us all.

When we meet this Child, God begins a slow, intricate process of calling from our most profound selves the greatest gifts and the truest strengths our humanity can give birth to. God calls up our true selves, made like this child we worship, in the image and likeness of God. And that's something no superhero can be.

These are the qualities humanity is crying out for in this present time of war, violence, grief, anger and mistrust. God gave time and gentleness to earn trust. Jesus offered forgiveness and love to any who hurt him. But most important of all, he was – and remains – *with us*. For us to follow his example takes a lifetime's formation to learn, and a grace that the world desperately needs. He was born the Prince of Peace. Ours is to choose to follow his example, and bring to the world a choice for kindness and grace in every circumstance. That's the Spirit of Christmas, who has come to dwell in us. The Maker of the universe, become one of us – a newborn child. God bless all of you and yours this Christmas. Amen.