

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

GOD IN A MANGER "The Word became flesh..." John 1: 14

What do we do when we're away from our loved ones and missing their company? We often try to 'phone them, email them, text them, or occasionally even drop them a card or a letter. If we can't be physically present with someone, then we try to be present with that person through our words. That 'phone call expresses something of our love and commitment.

Even if we have nothing terribly significant to say, we discuss the trivialities of our day simply because we really want to hear their voice.

In Jesus, the Word of Almighty God comes to us. We hear the voice of God expressing His faithful love and commitment to us. But this Word is a Word made flesh. God the Father doesn't just 'phone us – His Word is made flesh... it is physically present. It is a Word that John himself has seen... and heard... and touched (1 John 1: 1–3).

God takes on human flesh. He lies in a manger. God plays with other children, and eats round the table. God sweats on the roadside, and sleeps in the boat. God shares our human weaknesses, and experiences our temptations. This is the wonder of the incarnation, God is clothed in human flesh: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." (Colossians 2: 9). It's as if all the splendour of Almighty God has been squeezed into one human body.

Imagine trying to pack every last one of our possessions into a suitcase – squashing it, pushing it, sitting on it, trying to cram them all in, one by one. That's a little bit like what God did at the incarnation – He took the fullness of the Deity and squeezed it into bodily form, nothing was left out. Jesus is both truly divine and truly human – Christmas marks the coming of God Himself. God is unseen and unseeable – except in Jesus Christ who makes Him known.

John's version of the Christmas story isn't the Christmas story as we've come to expect it. There's no stable, no donkey, and no star. There are no angels, no shepherds and no wise men. Even Mary and Joseph don't get a look-in. Instead the focus is entirely on Jesus, the God-become-man. This is Christmas stripped bare – all that's left is Jesus, and that's all we really need.

It's so easy to forget Him, even at Christmas, perhaps especially at Christmas. But the truth is we'll never enjoy Christmas properly unless we understand who it is who was born in Bethlehem that night. We won't enjoy life to the full until we see God, in a manger.

So, by all means, let's enjoy the busyness, ensuring we've bought our gifts, written our cards, ordered the turkey, attended all the events we've been invited to, and ticked off seeing a variety of relatives. But, let's not get distracted from the wonder of God becoming man. Let's enjoy Christmas stripped back to the way it was intended to be, for all we really need to make our December explode with joy is to permit our lives to revolve around the One who brings truth, life, community, reality, clarity – light.