

Greetings in the beloved name of the Babe of Bethlehem,

SCRIPTURE:

1 Timothy 3:16 (MSG) – Larger reading: 1 Timothy 3:14-16

“This Christian life is a great mystery, far exceeding our understanding, but some things are clear enough: He appeared in a human body, was proved right by the invisible Spirit, was seen by angels. He was proclaimed among all kinds of peoples, believed in all over the world, taken up into heavenly glory.”

STORY: as told by Brett Blair

Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know about their hardships. Often he dressed in the clothes of a workingman or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited thought that he was their ruler. One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the course food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!"

REFLECTION:

Accepting what we know about Jesus and committing ourselves to move ever further into what we don't know of Jesus (the great unknown) is the challenge. On the one hand this entire "God-becoming-man-thing" is extremely hard for some to accept or deal with within the context of the reality of their life. It simply doesn't make human sense. But that is the point. God works in ways that, to our human way of thinking, simply doesn't make sense. This why it is called faith – **Forsaking All I Trust Him.**

We will have nothing but Excedrin-headache #1 if we try to reason ourselves into an understanding ... God becoming man ... one of us? Why? How? For what purpose? Dying on a cross? Coming back to life? Truly it is a mystery ... a mystery known only to God ... a mystery for us to accept ... a mystery that can change our lives. And, maybe that is the point of our Excedrin-headache – until we reach the point in our life that we feel that a change should or has to take place it will remain a mystery. But when we have our backs against the wall and we have nowhere else to turn to for answers the mystery of the incarnation becomes clear ... the trust of faith becomes a living reality ... we surrender ourselves to what we know about Jesus and leave that which we don't know about Him to another day, a day of growth in the faith.

As was illustrated in the story, what happens in the "God-becoming-a-man-thing" is that God was giving himself – not gold or silver or a lottery win or a trophy spouse or a new job or better behaved children or freedom from cancer or the elevation of pain or the selling of our home or any number of other things we pray for – he gives us himself, to walk with us through the ups and downs of life.

When going through pastoral care training we learn a lot of things, but the greatest lesson was the one about simply holding a dying persons hand – not what is said or what is prayed – just the presences with a touch, holding the hand and sitting at the bedside. The dying person’s fears are eased to know that whatever they are facing they are not alone. Therein lies the mystery of God coming to us in Jesus in that whatever we have to face in this life we are not alone, he is with us, holding our hand, going through it as we go through it. We are not alone.

Dr. Eugene Peterson in his *The Message* translation/paraphrase of the 1 Timothy passage quoted above expands the passage to include the full scope of the mystery of the Christian belief. It can help us understand a little more about the mystery surround this “God-becoming-man-thing,” but it really won’t make much sense to most of us until we need someone to hold our hand.

QUOTE: “*The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding.*” - Martin Luther

PRAYER:

Our hands are outstretched. We need to know of your presence. What we have to face today is little more than challenging. So please take our hand, we are scared, the challenge is great, and fear is starting to take root in our souls. Our hands are outstretched to You. Help!

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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