

Karen Hollis
December 24, 2019
Luke 2:1-20
Christmas Reflection

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be reflections of your word to us this morning, in Christ Jesus, we pray, Amen.

I imagine, there in the hay . . . still busy after the birth . . . I imagine Mary and Joseph fully present with this moment. The baby breathes in and out, making little baby noises . . . he opens his eyes and the couple is face to face with the Holy. As they look into his eyes, they exchange with him love and blessings . . . this is the essence of the incarnation, of God coming in human form, to be known in the act of loving.

The spirit that makes a home in this little human person, animating this tiny body . . . this spirit comes intentionally and comes in love. Jesus is both fully divine and fully human. His parents see divinity in his eyes just as easily as they experience his human cry, his need for constant feeding, and regular diaper changes. Like all humans, he will grow to understand his physical limits, how to navigate the culture around him . . . he will learn who he is, what he's capable of, and his purpose on earth. He will actualize that purpose on earth in the story we hear continually – he will heal, perform miracles, preach the Good News . . . he will teach us about love.

God has been leading up to this birth for a long time. Our God who made all of creation, who comes to Abram, promising to be the God of all his descendants . . . our God who appears to Moses and comes down from the mountain to live in the tabernacle . . . this is the same God who is born this night in the person of Jesus, the Christ, the one who comes to transform the world. With each movement, from creation to Jesus' birth, God comes ever closer to us, ever more present with God's creation . . . to teach us about love. Theologian, Cynthia Bourgeault asks, could it be that this earthly realm . . . offers precisely the conditions to express certain aspects of divine love that cannot become real in any other way?¹ Perhaps it is exactly the denseness of these conditions, the sharp edges of this world, that call forth the most exquisite dimensions of love – qualities such as steadfastness, tenderness, commitment, forbearance, fidelity, and forgiveness. These mature and subtle flavours of love have no real context in a realm where there are no edges and boundaries, where everything just flows.² But here in the physical world, these qualities of love shine in the face of suffering . . . and we are drawn to them like gravity . . . they help us keep our feet on the ground . . . they help us find ourselves and give us assurance we need to become the people we're called to be. It all happens not in the miraculous or the spectacular, though God shows up there too . . . but in the every day. God comes in human form to love in order to be known³ . . . and God comes as close to us as flesh so that these qualities of love can help us to become ever more human. "The more human we become, the more Spirit flourishes within us." The more the Spirit draws us into God's Kingdom, the more our humanity flourishes⁴ . . . particularly in the every day.

We could use God's presence today . . . as we find ourselves on the edge of a new year, a new decade . . . on the edge of social and political unrest and a changing planet, the sharpness of life is poignant.

¹ Wisdom Jesus p. 99

² Wisdom Jesus p. 100

³ Wisdom Jesus p. 99

⁴ A Christian Understanding of Human Nature p. 190

Do not fear, for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this night in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. On this night, God is incarnate with a teaching that transforms suffering and death; on this night, our God lives and moves in the world, and on this night the Mystery offers possibilities from a place unbounded by time and space. On this night and always. On this night, when God comes to be known, may we receive him and the blessing he brings . . . may we learn to live in the complex dimensions of love that make us fully human . . . that God may use us in the salvation of the world. Thanks be to God.