

Do You See What I See?

The celebration of Christmas, the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, changes our understanding of God. Do you see what I see?

If you carefully read today's words from the Gospel of John, you just may see it too, especially if you read it as I do:

In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God. Jesus was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Jesus, and without Jesus not one thing came into being. What came into being in Jesus was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome Jesus. And Jesus became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen Jesus' glory, the glory as of a Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

You see, the Gospel of John, makes a special claim about Jesus, that he was born **GOD IN THE FLESH**.

So, when Jesus changed water into wine, God did it. When Jesus healed an official's little boy who was deathly ill, God did it. When Jesus healed a man, who had been ill for 38 years, God did it. When Jesus fed 5000 people with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish, God did it. When Jesus calmed the storm on the sea and walked on water, God did it. When Jesus healed the blind man, God did it. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, God did it.

After writing all this, John says, "I have written these things so that you may believe." He is in essence saying, "Do you see what I see? And what does John see? He sees (and I with him) that through the birth of Jesus, God has entered the world and is busy helping, healing, feeding, loving and saving people in the world. In fact, when we see the things Jesus did in the world, we see the way God wants the world to be.

We see God wants those who are sick to be healed, those who are hungry to be fed, those facing storms to be saved, those caught in sin to be forgiven, those who are blind to see, those who are lost to be found, those facing death to be reassured that if they believe in Jesus, they will have eternal life.

Do you see what I see? Do you see the God that I see?

The claim we, Christian people, make about Jesus at Christmas, is radical. It's radical to say that Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem, was born God in the flesh. And it's also radical to say that once in the flesh, Jesus goes about the business of changing our entire picture and perspective of God.

What do I mean by this? Well, through Jesus we see that God is more loving than demanding, more forgiving than judgmental. Through Jesus we see that God draws close to people, rather than keeps his distance. Through Jesus we see that God makes laws, but he loves people more.

So, even if the law says stay away from certain people, Jesus talks with a woman at a well in John 4 and receives a drink of water from her. Even if the law says people shouldn't do any work on the Sabbath day of worship, Jesus heals a man in John 5 who had been sick for 38 years on the Sabbath day. Even if the law says a woman can be stoned to death for her sin, Jesus forgives her in John 8 and challenges her to live a new life.

Do you see what I see? Do you see through Jesus the God that I see? Through Jesus, we see a God who is loving, who is forgiving, who draws close to people, and who loves people more than laws. God loves people more than anything.

The Gospel of John shows us through Jesus, that God in the flesh, is different than we expect. For example, in John 13, we see Jesus

wanting to wash his disciples' feet. Peter says – NO WAY! I should wash your feet. You are the master; I am your servant. But Jesus says, if you don't let me wash your feet, then you are not on my side. Peter says – Yes, Lord, I am on your side, so, wash my whole body, please.

Then Jesus washed the feet of all his disciples. This really means that God washed the feet of all the disciples. God even washed the feet of Judas who betrayed him and Peter who denied him. Then Jesus said, as I love and serve you, go out into the world and love and serve other people. But by now you know, it was actually God in the flesh who said, as I love and serve you, go out into the world and serve other people.

Now, if God washes the feet of the disciples, then God wants to wash our feet too. Maybe not literally our feet, but he certainly wants to love and serve us. What I mean by this is that God is not distant from us because of our sin or some hardship we are experiencing. In fact, when we are sinful, when we are hungry, when we are sick, when we are hurting, when we are dying, and when we are dead, these are the times that God charges toward us to be with us and love us, to help us and heal us, and ultimately, to save us. Its why God became flesh in the first place.

Do you see what I see?

It is interesting that Jesus always got in trouble for eating and spending time with sinners. As Christian people, we should trumpet this. While some supposedly good people would stay away from those they consider sinful, Jesus does not stay away from them. In fact, Jesus draws close to them and spends time with them. So, in the same way, God does not stay away from sinful people or any people either, God draws near them.

Well, my friends in Christ, I am pleased to say this means God draws near you too. God charges into your heart and your life right now today. Jesus was born, he became God in the flesh and lived in the world, so that God could always be with you, forgive you, love you, help you, heal you and save you. To me, this means nothing can separate you from Jesus. Nothing can separate you from God. Nothing can separate you from the love of God – not sickness or sin, the coronavirus or Covid-19, evil or death.

Nothing.

Yes, indeed, the babe in the manger, Jesus, cooing and kicking in the hay, is God in the flesh, full of grace and truth.

How could this not change our entire understanding of God?

Do you see what I see?

Amen.