

December 27, 2020 | Sanctuary worship service

TEXT: [Galatians 4:1–7](#)

TITLE: The Incarnation Committee

By the Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Once upon a time, a long time ago, St. Peter convened a special meeting in heaven. It was a gathering of the angel cadets—those fresh recruits among the heavenly host who were still earning their wings. It always amused and somewhat annoyed the higher-ranking cherubim that God took pleasure in seeking advice from these cadets. After all, this was the group that had chosen the size of the avocado pit, who thought it made sense for the Pirates to trade away Gerrit Cole, Andrew McCutcheon, and now Josh Bell, and who kept recommending pass plays for the Steelers when it is 4th and one at the goal line. Let's just say that their skills of discernment were suspect at best.

When the Angel Cadets were all gathered together, St. Peter informed them that they were now a special Incarnation Committee. God had decided to descend to earth and wished to hear their opinions as to what form God should assume for this historic event. It was a big assignment. For a while, no one spoke as the cadets sat in a circle nibbling on Chex Mix. Finally, Angela, the most organized member of the group spoke up. "Let's list off some of the options. What are the main forms of life on earth?" Like a scientific catechism memorized for school, the cadets answered in unison, "Plant, animal, and mineral." After that, the suggestions started.

"Maybe God should take the form of a sacred mountain—a place on earth of great strength that all the nations could see. Or maybe God should become incarnate as a mighty tree, a towering redwood or wide-branched oak. Maybe God should come to earth as an animal that can inspire, like a lion, a soaring eagle, or a blue whale." Angela interrupted, "No, no, no. You've got to be more creative. Think outside the box. God's incarnation has to reflect God's eternal character and yet be in a form that is immediately understood by all people. What are some other suggestions?"

After a pause, one cadet said, "What about air? Air is necessary for life and it can be found everywhere on earth. God is Spirit; maybe God's return to earth could be like the time of earth's creation when the Spirit of God moved over the face of the void and brought order out of chaos."

"No," said another cadet. "Air is too vague and intangible. I propose water. It too is necessary for all life and can be found in lots of places—rain from the clouds, waves on ocean shores, ice on the tundra, or streams rippling across the land." A third cadet broke in, "No, water is too fragile and fickle. It evaporates when you need it most; it floods when you need it least. I vote for bread. Bread is a symbol for all life-sustaining foods. It feeds and nourishes, yet comes from the bounty of God's good earth." Melvin, an Angel Cadet third class, perked up when the subject shifted to food. "I vote for chocolate, since that's the real food of life." The other cadets quickly shushed him and told Melvin to get serious.

Several other suggestions were made. “What about light? Light chases away shadows and fear. It brings new energy and lifts spirits. Or what about a poem? Human beings rely on language, and since God’s main desire is to communicate with them, why not choose something that could be translated into all their languages? Or better yet—music. Music communicates sometimes better than words. It can be done in solo performances or by ensembles of all sizes. And it can express the entire range of human emotions.”

Then someone interrupted. “There is a lot of pain and suffering on earth. What about having God become incarnate as teardrops? In moments of loss and death, God would be near at hand whenever anyone was mourning or feeling heavy of heart.” Someone else said, “But there’s also a lot of joy on earth. That fact can’t be neglected in God’s decision.”

Melvin, daring to speak up despite have a mouth full of pretzels, said, “My favorite sound is the music of children’s laughter. God should choose that.”

Just then, St. Peter cocked his head to one side, attentive to some inner voice speaking to him. Then he smiled and said, “Melvin, you’ll be pleased to know that God agrees with you. That is why God has chosen to be incarnate on earth in the form of a child. The most universal of all human experiences is that of birth itself; and the most common of all realities is the living out of a human life as a person of flesh and blood. God has decided to be incarnate in the form of a child, so that humans might recognize and understand the fullness of God’s being.”

Now no major decision, whether made in church committees or the chambers of heaven, is ever without some dissent or questioning. Immediately cadet hands waved in the air, wanting to know the when, where and how details of this momentous event. St. Peter had them lower their hands as he patiently explained more. “When will this occur? Well, while we exist beyond time, the human story unfolds through the medium of time. This incarnation will need to happen when humans are developed enough to remember and write down their experience of the incarnation, but not too late in human history when their false pride and Google technology make them think they already understand all the mysteries of the universe. Let’s just say this incarnation will happen at the right time, in the fullness of time.”

“Where will it happen? Well, it needs to be somewhere near to the place where human consciousness and civilization first evolved. A good spot is the land bridge between the great continent to the south and the mountainous land to the north. This child will be born a person of color to a family outside the halls of power. His story will be told as part of the story of every nation, of every people, and of every land. Now some will try to claim the child as their own—drawing him in their likeness and insisting God’s power and grace falls most generously on their tribe. But no racial bias or prejudice can last long wherever this child is truly worshiped, honored and adored.

“My dear cadets, this decision has been made with a lot of thought and planning. By being incarnate as a human child, the earthly cycle of birth, life and death will be shown to be holy in every stage of its unfolding. By being incarnate in a particular human being, God will be grounded to a specific place and time, so that God can avoid being some abstract, vague principle only for philosophers to study. Yes, this incarnation will involve a child of a specific gender—but gender is really only a concern of biological procreation. Who that child is—and how this child embodies love for others is something, as you know, that goes far beyond gender. Hopefully through this child, humans will realize at last that love is love is love is love.”

“Therefore, God will be incarnate as a child born to Mary and Joseph. This child will become an adult, a teacher, a rabbi, healer, friend, and savior—a child, born of a woman, born under the law in order to redeem all from oppression and injustice, adopting the form of a human being so that all humans might also be adopted as children of God, heirs of God’s love.”

With that, the meeting concluded. Granted, the minutes of the Incarnation Committee meeting don’t reflect all the discussion that occurred, which makes perfect sense. The incarnation of God in Christ is a mystery that can be explored for a lifetime yet never be fully exhausted. And as befits the wonder of God’s inclusive nature, it is worth noting that almost all the suggestions of the angel cadets were honored in the final decision.

In the fullness of time, God came to us as a child, Jesus the Christ. Yet also:

God came as a living being, made of the elements of this world.

God came as Spirit, the wind and breath of life, active since creation’s glory.

God came as the light of world that the darkness cannot overcome.

God came as the living water that washes and renews.

God came as the bread of life feeds every hungry soul.

God came as music and tears and joy and laughter—especially the laughter of children and adults the world over.

And God came to us as love, promising never to leave or forsake us. And in heaven as on earth, there was and there still is great rejoicing.

AMEN