

January 2, 2022 | Sanctuary Worship Service

TEXT: [John 1:1–18](#)

TITLE: God is not OUT There

By the Rev. BJ Woodworth

IMAGINE THIS...Some 13.8 billion years ago, out of the overflow of LOVE, God, created and spoke the universe into existence with a Big Bang. And in that beginning of all things. was the Word. Who John says was the Christ, who was with God; Christ was in the very beginning with God. In fact, *all things* came into being through Christ and without Christ nothing could come into being nor stay together. Christ is the giver of all life and light in the entire universe. Christ was perhaps the birthplace of the Big Bang. Christ, is wisdom that birthed then entire cosmic universe into being—
*POOF...BANG...BOOM....*and the world was and has been ever since.

AND THEN... billions of years after God created all things, some 2,022 years from where we sit today that same God, so loved the world God created sent the same Christ to inhabit a world he created. God incarnates God's self in Jesus of Nazareth, in and through Mary. The same eternal Word, that was, is and is to come, that created all things, became flesh and blood, as a zygote, grew and was formed in Mary's womb and birthed as a baby in a manger. God came near and lived and dwelt among us.

WOW!

Can you imagine the scene on that first Christmas Eve, on Jesus' birthday? The waiting and anticipation had come to an end for Mary and Joseph and their lives and our lives would be forever changed. Max Lucado describes it like this:

It all happened in a moment, a most remarkable moment. As moments go, that one appeared no different than any other. If you could somehow pick it up off the timeline and examine it, it would look exactly like the ones that have passed while you have [heard] these words. It came and it went. It was preceded and succeeded by others just like it. It was one of the countless moments that have marked time since eternity became measurable.

But in reality, that particular moment was like none other. For through that segment of time a spectacular thing occurred. God became a [human being]. While the creatures of earth walked unaware, Divinity arrived. Heaven opened herself and placed her most precious one in a [woman's] womb.

The omnipotent, in one instant, was made breakable. The One who had been spirit became pierce-able. The One who was larger than the universe became an embryo. And the One who sustains the world with a word chose to be dependent upon the nourishment of a young girl.

God as a fetus. Holiness sleeping in a womb. The creator of life being created. God was given eyebrows, elbows, two kidneys, and a spleen. He stretched against the walls and floated in the amniotic fluids of his mother...God had come near.

That moment forever changed every moment!

God, who is infinite, becomes finite.

God who is cosmic becomes local.

God who is far off comes near.

God who is Spirit takes on skin, bones, and breath.

God, who is Life, nursed at Mary's breast.

God who is all-powerful becomes weak and vulnerable.

Oh, what a gift we have been given at Christmas! Do you realize the breadth and the depth of the gift that exists in the Christmas season? The incarnation, the Word becoming flesh, the birth of Jesus is the most amazing gift we could ever imagined. It is our salvation!

Father Richard Rohr says that Jesus's birth *"is the overcoming of the gap between God and everything else. It is the synthesis of matter and spirit. Without [Jesus' birth], God remains separate from us and from creation. Because of incarnation, we can say, "God is with us!" In fact, God is in us, and in everything else that God created. We all have the divine DNA; everything bears the divine fingerprint, if the mystery of embodiment is true."*

God becoming a baby is an event that altered all of life. God in the moment of Jesus' birth affirms that IT IS GOOD TO BE HUMAN! The physical, the material, that natural, the bodily and fleshly realities of our lives are good; they can be trusted and in fact they are divine!

This world is the hiding place of God.

The Real Presence of God is everywhere—in your neighbor, in art and music, in nature, in animals, in the sun and moon and stars, in food, in sinners and enemies, in work and in play, in bread and wine. As the Psalmist rhetorically asks, "Where can we go from God's presence, where can we flee God's presence?"

Jesus's birth makes visible the hiding place of God, in Jesus' human flesh, in a physical earthly birth. In the words of the late Rachel Held Evans, "God shrinks down to the size of zygote implanted in the soft lining of a woman's womb God; grows fingers and toes; God kicks and hiccups in utero; God inches down the birth canal and enters this world covered in blood, God feeds at Mary's breast."

In the birth and incarnation of Jesus, the Christ, God makes sacred once and for all the stuff of this earth—politics, education, childbirth, food, animals, birds, feelings, sex, art, bridges, and even death, where life is not over but simply changed. ALL this because GOD CAME NEAR!!

God Is Not Out There, Somewhere, God is here, in this moment, right now, in you, with us, in fact that is God's name, Immanuel, God-with-us!!! There is no separation.

Again, the words of Father Richard Rohr, *"Our view of God as separate and distant has harmed our understandings of our sexuality; of our relationship to food, possessions, and money; and of our relationship to animals, nature, and our own incarnate selves. This loss is foundational as to why we live such distraught and divided lives. Jesus came precisely to put it all together for us and in us."*

The Birth of Jesus, the Christ, in the flesh, on this earth, as a baby, as God-with-us, says, everything is scared, everything is transcendent, everything belongs, everything is enchanted, and everything is glorious, we and everything around us are shining like the sun.

Questions: Have you seen this? Have you seen this glory? Have you noticed it? Have you experienced it? Are you looking for God's glory—within yourself, in the person next to you, and out in the world?

Let me close with this...

In John's Gospel we heard these closing words: the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen God's glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth ...

We have seen God's glory. If we are awake, and for those who have eyes to see, like the shepherds, while going about their daily work will see the glory of the Lord shone around us. You have seen the glory of the Lord in the word becoming flesh, IN YOU, IN US.

- Our faces, our lives are aglow with the glory of God because God has come near to us.
- You are being transformed into the likeness of God with ever-increasing glory – we are getting brighter!
- The glory that God gave to Jesus, Jesus gives to us through the Spirit.
- You and we are the dwelling place of God where God's glory abides, lives and dwells

So, in these last days of the Christmas season and in this new year, I ask you:

1. Do you know...really, really know, that you have seen and are becoming the glory of God?
2. What inhibits you from seeing and awakening to the glory of God in yourself, in others and in all things?
3. Where are you being invited to show forth God's glory and shine towards others?

Amen and may it be so.