

Where are You Looking for Jesus?

by Rev. Robert Griffith

Watch this video first: <https://skitguys.com/videos/item/the-innkeepers-dilemma>

Now the story line there was certainly not strictly true to the Biblical account – there was a little bit of artistic license. But what I think Tommy and Eddie managed to do for us in that skit is show us how easy it is for us to miss God in the midst of the mundane, as most of the world missed God in that stable that night because they were looking in the wrong place or not looking at all.

So where will you be looking for Jesus this Christmas? Will you even be looking at all?

God's people had been worshipping Him from a distance for centuries and waiting for the promised Messiah Who would come and liberate them ... but they were looking in the wrong places. They were looking for an up-front God ... a clear political and social leader ... a military commander ... a God Whom the whole world would see clearly and bow the knee to Him as He liberated His people from oppression. They never, ever dreamed of looking out the back in the barn for a baby – they expected a man – a mighty warrior – a conqueror – a king – not a helpless baby in a feeding trough.

Where will you be looking for Jesus this Christmas? Will you even be looking at all? Have you grown tired of the story of 'God with us' when you can't see His hand at work in your life, your family, your Church or your community?

Nor would they have ever thought of Nazareth as the place the Messiah would emerge from as His world-changing ministry began in earnest thirty years later. Even though some of the Messianic prophecies hinted at God coming in this radical way, most of the people missed it because they never expected God to sneak in the back way and infiltrate humanity so humbly, so personally, so intimately, so outrageously ... as to be born as a human in the least majestic, least obvious way.

This is the miracle we call the *incarnation*. When God became human - when God the Son became the Son of Man. How He did that is not just a wonderful story which has given us nativity scenes, great songs and pageants and the wonder of the Christmas Story and celebration ... **how God entered humanity to redeem us and deliver us from our own ignorance, stupidity and sin ... is how God still enters humanity today.** The incarnation was not just an event in the Middle East over 2000 years ago. The incarnation is the present mystery of God with us ... every day.

The Christmas story tells us many things, but the most important thing it tells us is that God desires to be 'with us' He desires to be *Emmanuel* in the most personal, intimate, 'human' way imaginable. But He cannot be Emmanuel to those who are looking elsewhere and miss Him in their own back yard, their own family, their own workplace and their own daily lives. Where are you looking for Jesus this Christmas? Are you even looking at all?

God stepped out of heaven into the womb of a frightened Jewish teenager and became part of us as deeply as He possibly could. He was born like us, grew like us, was subject to everything humans are subject to. He didn't do this just so He could be authentically human – which was essential so He could secure our salvation – the incarnation was also a proclamation from the Creator and Sustainer of the universe that His life and power and salvation and mission will unfold for all time in the midst of our humanity - not separate from it in some celestial or disconnected way.

So when Jesus the man commenced His ministry about thirty years after this amazing night in Bethlehem, He proclaimed the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven by saying, “*The Kingdom of God is here,*” and “*The kingdom of God is within you.*”

When He said that, over and over and over again, He was talking about the unfolding power and reality of the Kingdom of God unfolding in and through His ministry – but He was also pointing back to that manger in Bethlehem in a powerful way.

When Jesus said, “*The kingdom of God is within you,*” He was talking personally to each of us but He was also referencing the miracle of the incarnation – where the power and reality of God became part of our human DNA ... heaven didn’t just come to earth that day in Bethlehem so we could join the shepherds and wise men as ‘observers’ or ‘spectators’ or just as ‘worshippers.’ Heaven exploded within humanity ... the power and reality and perfection and eternal glory of heaven was released into all humanity past, present and future.

God is with us ... everywhere ... all the time ... on our best days and worst days. He is part of humanity and we don’t need a Priest to enter into the holy of holies on our behalf. We don’t need some spiritual mentor or leader to impart the power of God to us. We just need someone to tell us the FULL story of Christmas - the REAL story behind the romanticized nativity scenes. We just need the Holy Spirit to reveal what has been true since the day we were born: **GOD IS WITH US.**

The kingdom of God is within you. The rule and reign and reality of the risen, living Jesus Christ is already in our midst and He never leaves us – no matter how distant we become to Him by ignoring Him or looking for Him in all the wrong places – He is still *Emmanuel* and He is still God with us.

Let’s bow before God now in silent prayer as we ask Him to re-connect us with the power and wonder and reality of the greatest story ever told - because this story is true - this is not folklore, fairy tale or fabrication. More importantly, this story remains relevant and powerfully present every day of our lives – if we let it into our crowded hearts.

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