



Luke 2:6-14

Jesus becoming human is the fulfillment of the century old plan of God. He is the Jewish hope, and the coming of God's blessings. When it was time for Jesus to be born the king decided to count his people. So Mary and Joseph returned to Bethlehem. When this baby is born, the heavens open and angels appear in the sky to nearby shepherds. This baby is no normal child, He is the Savior and Messiah, the One who brings peace. He is not a powerful deity who came to earth glowing in glory and mighty, but is sleeping in a feeding trough visited by shepherds and commoners.

This baby, this Immanuel, is himself the good news.

So often we are accustomed to connecting the good news to the death of Jesus. We describe the gospel, good news, as Jesus dying for your sins. But long before Jesus died, He came to live with us and that was good news of great joy. The good news is that He came and He lives.

God has always sought out community with humans. After Adam and Eve's betrayal, God has

tried to rebuild His relationship with Humans and to draw into close friendship with them. God first called the Abraham and his descendants to be his people and be blessed with his presence. Back then only Israelites could claim God as their God, only the Jews could come into the Temple and the presence of God. They were the only blessed people.

In Jesus though, that is no longer the case. One of his most controversial actions of overturning tables and making a whip to drive people from the Temple happened because the outer court, where non-Jews were welcome, was turned into a marketplace. The emphasis of Jesus was not to make the Jews an elite class, it was to fulfill the promise given to Abraham, the father of all Israelites, that all the nations on the earth can be blessed in him.

When Jesus comes to live as one of us, He begins a new stage of God's community with people. From the moment of His birth onward, more and more humans were invited into the presence of God, to be at home with Him. Jesus was indiscriminate in His miracles and impartial with His time. In the life and mission of Jesus, the blessings of God are given out to anyone who desires it. Chief among those blessings is His presence.

Being blessed by God does not mean that everything will go your way. It does not mean that He will use His miraculous powers to heal or help you. He may, or He may not. Our joy does not rest on being blessed with the gifts of God or how often God supernaturally intercedes to give you things you want. Were that the case, your joy would always be fleeting. God makes no promise of an easy life, often Jesus promises just the opposite. When He says that

his burden is easy and his yoke is light, He does not say that there is no burden or no weight to pull, only that you pull it together.

This is the central blessing that Abraham received: that God was with him and for him. In the birth of Jesus, God becomes with people completely and later when Jesus ascends, He gives His Spirit to live in and with us.

Jesus ushers in a whole new era in the presence of God and for that we are immensely blessed. If your investments do well and you flourish at your job, you are truly blessed because you can experience those with God at your side. Conversely, if fail your class or miss out on an opportunity, you are still truly blessed. Even when the weight of the world feels like it stands on your shoulders, it isn't on your shoulders alone. You bear it together with Christ.

Jesus came to be our blessing, the God who is with us. In Him we can be joyful in plenty and in want. He is your good news and your great joy. He has come to live as one of us to draw close so that we can enjoy the presence of God.

As you take a moment to light the 3rd candle, the joy candle, remember that you are truly blessed by God. Today I bring you good news of great joy. Jesus lives as a human and God is with you always.

Let these flames remind you of His presence with you today.

Pray: "Lord, too often I only find joy when I feel blessed and miss out on the continual blessing that your presence is to me. Help me to accept more and more that your presence alone is the blessing I seek." Then spend a few moments with God thanking Him for times that you have found Joy in his presence.