

**Rejoice! @****John 1:1-14****December 28, 2014****Rev. Sharlyn Gates**

Over the past few weeks of Advent and then again on Christmas Eve we've talked about the gift, given to us by God. We have mentioned almost every Sunday that this baby Son, who would come to earth, would be named *Jesus* – which means “the one who saves.”

That name is important because it is the name given by God himself, and the meaning is *exactly why* he came to earth – *to save us*. He saved us from a life full of sin and darkness. He saved us by going to the cross and by rising from the dead.

The Scriptures say, “At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” (Philippians 2:10-11)

It's a wonderful name that is called on by many, every day – a beckoning call for him to be present in the hour of need, to be a comfort in a time of sorrow, to be our inspiration – to be our long drink of cool water when we are dry as a bone spiritually.

But today we turn our attention on the other name that he is called. Isaiah, the prophet of old, proclaimed: ‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him *Emmanuel*’, which means, ‘*God is with us.*’ (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)

You mean, *God* came to us? *God's Self* somehow squeezed all that majesty and glory and magnificence into that little baby body and was born as a human?

God came as a baby who was vulnerable and totally dependant on two inexperienced people who didn't have much in the way of money, or any other means.

They rode a donkey, or they walked. Plus they were under the Roman rule, which of course, is the reason they were in Bethlehem – to register because Caesar demanded it; had to keep track of all those Jews, you know. Make them pay their fair share of taxes – and then charge them a little more.

God, coming in the form of this baby named Jesus, yet called Emmanuel is what we call *The Incarnation*. Who can explain it, or describe, or understand it?

Theologians have tried over the years but it is one of those great mysteries. Yet, somehow, to me at least, it just makes sense. I can't quite get it all straight that God was *there*, somehow;

and God was *here* as a human who is called the *Son* of God;

and God is *still* here around us and in our hearts as we know the Holy Spirit – all to be called the *Trinity* – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God – one God, in three persons.

But I am eternally grateful for the faith that I am given – a faith that helps me to believe, not because I can *see* it with my eyes, but because I can *experience* it everywhere I work in ministry, and in my own personal life as well.

I am so grateful when I minister to one who is dying to be able to say with great conviction that God came to us in Christ Jesus so we would know he loves us.

I am so thankful that in those darkest hours of the long night, watching and waiting with family, that there is no darkness that can ever overcome this Light that is Emmanuel – this Light that John says existed before anything else. This Light known as the very *Word of God*.

That Word that spoke and everything came into existence. And John says that: “What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

It answers that prophecy so long ago by Isaiah when he proclaimed:  
 The people who walked in darkness  
     have seen a great light;  
 those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
     on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

I saw in the news this week that it has been 10 years since the Indian Ocean earthquake and Tsunami wiped out countries, killing over 200,000 people. It was so devastating to watch back when it happened.

Many of us felt helpless and hopeless as we saw people’s lives destroyed. These were people who suddenly lived in a land of deep darkness.

But 10 years later, while the painful memory of that event still lives in the minds and hearts of the people who survived, they have rebuilt; they have found some light again in their lives.

I don’t know how many of them would say that light is the Light of God that we are speaking of here, but I believe it *is* God at work who helps people recover; who gives them hope in a hopeless situation.

John tells us that “the Word – God’s very being – became Flesh and dwelt among us.” That’s amazing stuff. God became a human named Jesus (the one who saves) and *dwelt* with us.”

I’ve told some of you this before that word “dwelt” in Greek literally means “pitched a tent.” God came and pitched his tent to live among people who had nothing but a tent to live in, as well as all people everywhere.

I love the song that is written by Mark Lowrey. He sings with the Gaither quartet and he is also a Christian comedian. These words to his song speak deeply of what we are reflecting on today. The baby Jesus is *God himself*. The song is titled “Mary Did You Know.” The lyrics go like this:

**Mary Did You Know Lyrics (Words by Mark Lowrey, music by Buddy Green, written in 1984, recorded by Gaither Band©1998)**

Mary, did you know  
that your Baby Boy would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know  
that your Baby Boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know  
that your Baby Boy has come to make you new?  
This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know  
that your Baby Boy will give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know  
that your Baby Boy will calm the storm with His hand?

Mary did you know  
that your Baby Boy has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little Baby you kissed the face of God?

Mary did you know ... Mary did you know

The blind will see.  
The deaf will hear.  
The dead will live again.

The lame will leap.  
The dumb will speak the praises of The Lamb.

Mary, did you know  
that your Baby Boy is Lord of all creation?

Mary, did you know  
that your Baby Boy would one day rule the nations?

Did you know  
that your Baby Boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?  
The sleeping Child you're holding is the Great, I Am.

Because of this Baby Boy that Mary had, this precious face she kissed – the very face of God – we can sing and shout for joy. We can proclaim at the funeral of a loved one that nothing can separate us from God's love.

We can dance and sing and rejoice because we know we belong to Him and that someday we shall see him face to face – the very face of God.

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice! Your Light has come – the Light of the world – and there is no darkness that can come over you that will ever consume that precious, glorious light.

Rejoice! Let us stand together and rejoice as we sing.

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