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Christmas Midnight
24 December 2010
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Luke 2:1-20

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

It all happened long ago,
On a *certain* day of a *certain* year, under a *certain* ruler, who issued a *certain* decree.

Quirinius was governor,
And Gaius Julius Augustas Caesar, or, *Octavius* for short, was Emperor.

Saint Luke gives us these details for two reasons:
First, because he's simply a good historian—
It happened that way and so he tells it that way;
But Second, and much more importantly, Luke writes this
“so that you may have *certainty*” (Lk 1:4) about this Jesus.

There's no assurance or certainty or anything to stand on if there's no time and place.

And everything about Christmas hinges on this *certainty*—
It all took place at a certain time in a certain place:
**“In the days of Caesar Augustus...when Quirinius was governor...in Judea,
the city of David, which is called, *Bethlehem*”** (Lk 2:1-4)

Now, just as the first Christmas had a certain time and a certain place,
so also does this Christmas—
except, this time you're here, too!

You weren't there with Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem—
you had no need to register in the census.
And you didn't keep watch with the shepherds.
You weren't rejected from the inn,
and you didn't gather around the manger.
You weren't asked to wrap the baby in swaddling clothes,
or to change His diaper.
(And yes, Jesus needed His diaper changed, too!)

You weren't around at *that* specific time or place—
but you're *here now*.

You always have a specific time and place because you're a real person.
You're a real person with real flesh and blood,
real joys and real pains—
you have real problems with real consequences.

How can you expect to be delivered from all these real problems,
if not by a *real* Savior?

Christmas is all about making you certain that this Jesus is for *real*.

It's simply incredible that God would become man—
real, physical, tangible, touchable, *real*.

Why would he do it?

Well, it's certainly not because of anything in you!
 It's not because you're good looking, or so sweet and charming.
 It's not because of all the good you do, or all the time you volunteer.
 And it's certainly not because you deserve it in the least—
 you *haven't* earned it!

No, this is the age-old question.
Why did God become man?

To start, He certainly didn't have to!

That says something right off the bat about this God of ours—
 He's a God who doesn't have to lift a finger for us,
 and yet, much more than a finger, He takes on the whole person.

God becomes man because He loves mankind.
 He loves Adam and Eve and all their children.
 He loves *you*.

But while we normally think of love as an emotion or a feeling,
 for God it's an action.
 If it were just a feeling, God could've loved us just fine without becoming man.

While *we* can say we love the poor and not give a dime,
 God can't do that.
 When He loves the poor, He gives *everything* He's got!

And so back to our question,
Why did God become man?—

Well, God became man *to die*.
 And He can't die unless He's got some flesh on Him.

You see, for God to love us, He must act.
 He can't keep His love simply up in His head or feelings or emotions—
 His love causes Him to become incarnate: to take on human flesh and blood.

Love draws the Creator of this world out of heaven and into the manger—
 to be held by His own creation.

It's His love that sends Angels into the fields, calling those shepherds
to see and rejoice in this gift from above.

It's His love that won't let Him sit idly by while we suffer here on earth in our own brokenness.

Each of us has our own brokenness.

You're not the only one who's got it hard.

You're not the only one with a broken family,
a damaged or ruined marriage,
a wayward child or abusive parent.

You're not the only one struggling to make ends meet,
fighting to put food on the table or clothes on the body.

You're not the only one who's sick,
having to sit through those miserable chemo therapies,
or hobble around with walker, wheel-chair, or crutch.

You're not the only one faking happiness,
smiling through your tears,
waiting to get home to cry.

You're not the only sinner out there.

And that's why God became man!

He became man because it would take the death of One greater than Adam,
who got us into this whole mess,
to undo all the other deaths out there!

He became man so that He could live and grow and sympathize
and stand up where all others fell down.

He became man so that He could go to the cross,
so that He could die *for you*.

Even the baby Jesus, the infant Who doesn't yet know to say, "Mama or Dada",
knows His is the way to the cross.

God became man to die,
to die for mankind—
giving His life as a ransom for sin,
paying the debt humanity owes,
offering the life of God in the flesh for the sake of sinful man.

God became man for you,
because He loves you—
and even if you *were* the only one who is broken,
He'd of done it all just the same!

He loves you in your brokenness,
your sadness, your sickness and your hatred,
He loves you even when you don't seem to love Him.

And that's what makes this Christmas so joyous—
the fact that you need not be joyful to rejoice.

You're more than welcome to have a rotten Christmas.
You're more than welcome to miss your husbands and wives and daughters and sons.
You're even welcome to hate this time of year—that's okay!

Because it's not your love for Him or this season that caused Him to become man—
but His love for you.

His love for you is more than a feeling or emotion or nostalgia,
He loves by what He does—
taking on flesh first from Mary,
and then walking that flesh through this sinful world
and onto the Cross.

He takes on flesh so that He could take on all of your sin to Himself—
He's a jealous God and doesn't want to share your sin with anyone else.
As long as He's got your sin, it can't hurt you anymore.

If you want to know whether or not God loves you,
look at the flesh and blood of the man Jesus—
first at the baby in Mary's arms,
and then at the lifeless, bleeding, dying, body hanging on the cross *for you!*

All of that went on at a certain time and in a certain place, just like His birth,
because it was *real!*

God *really* became man and dwelled amongst us.
He really walked and really talked,
He stubbed His toe and hammered His finger for *real*.

But most importantly, He suffered, died, and rose *in the flesh* for you!

Christmas is all about God becoming man, so that man might become divine.
He humbles Himself, coming down from eternity to our world of time and space,
in order that you might live with Him in eternity, with no limits or end!

The first Christmas had a certain time and place,
under Quirinius and Augustus Caesar,
in Judea on the way to Bethlehem.

At that Christmas God became man—
and we're *certain* of it.

But it wasn't until the cross that we found out exactly *why*—
and it wasn't until the waters of baptism splashed over your head,

that you found out He meant *you*!

This too had a certain time and a certain place—it was concrete and *real*.

And here He comes again today,
incarnate in bread and wine as your savior—
not because of any emotion or merit or joy in you,
but simply because He loves you.

Merry Christmas!

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit