

St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church

Keller, Texas

Sermon for Christmas Day ~ 2020

The Reverend Ronald D. Pogue

[John 1:1-18](#)

J.B. Phillips was an English theologian who made a big impact in the late 1950's and early 1960's. When I was about 12 years old, I attended a youth week in which the leaders had incorporated material from a little book by J. B. Phillips entitled, *When God Was Man*. This was written back in the 1950's. I am sure if he were writing it today, he would give it the title, *When God Was a Human Being*.

As we explored the message, I had the most important personal epiphany of my life. I suddenly became conscious of the profound significance of the Incarnation. I was stunned by the insight that at one point in history, God became a human being; that is, the One who is eternal entered time; the One who had always inhabited the heavens chose to come and live as a human being upon this earth. As St. John put it, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

There are so many implications to this event. I believe with all my heart that it is true; that on the first Christmas, Jesus was God who came to us in as a human being. I began to ponder what that means for living our lives. I cannot begin in one short sermon to exhaust the subject, but let me simply invite you to consider two things that are true if God has come to live among us as a human being.

First of all, it means that we humans can have a way of understanding what God is, a new access to understanding the mystery of the Creator who stands behind all reality. The creature, whose life is derived from the uncreated, cannot possibly ever completely comprehend the uncreated, but in the mystery of the Incarnation, we have a significant insight into God's nature and purpose.

One of my favorite Christmas stories has to do with a man who one night was trying to get a flock of birds to get out of the snow and go into his barn where it was warm. He thought to himself, "If only I could become one of them for a short while, I could guide them into the light and warmth." That story helped me begin to realize that the chasm between a bird and a human being, vast as it is, is nothing to compare between the chasm between a human being and the mysterious, divine Being that gives life. And I realized that we are as incapable of understanding God on our own as a bird is incapable of understanding humans.

It occurred to me that crossing the chasm from the other side really did occur on the first Christmas, because God, for us and our salvation, chose to cross that chasm and take on a form that we could understand. God became visible; God took on human flesh; God translated God's self into realities that are accessible to our human ways of knowing. We now have a window through which we can see deeper into the mystery of God, not because of our powers, but because of the gift of God's self-revelation that we celebrate at Christmas.

The other implication of the Christmas event is that if God has become a human being, it means that God understands us. God has moved from remoteness into closeness. When we experience the extremities

of human emotion, we need to express ourselves and to know that someone truly understands our experience. People in our lives who have shared similar experiences have a bond of understanding they can share with each other. There is healing, hope, and compassion in that sharing!

The Incarnation shows us that God knows what it's like to live as a human being, which means there's nothing you face today that is going to be strange to God. Therefore, the message of Christmas is that God became as we are so that we could better understand what God is, and we believe with all our hearts that God understands what we are. As the old hymn puts it, "Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal" (*Come, Ye Disconsolate*, Thomas Moore).

That is God's way of saving us and guiding us from darkness to light, from sorrow to joy, from death to life. God became as we are so that we might become as God is. There is the mystery of the Word made flesh, the Incarnation, God with us. And that is surely good news for all humanity not just at Christmas, but for all eternity.