

## **A Son for Us All      Christmas Eve Message, 2009**

When I think about babies, certain things come into my mind.

First, some of “the negatives”:

They’re completely dependent upon others for life – they can do nothing for themselves at first.

They’re difficult to communicate with – how do you know what they want???

They’re messy – food everywhere, diapers loaded with all kinds of interesting stuff, housecleaning goes to the bottom of the list of things to be done.

They’re unpredictable – you never know what they’ll do next – how do you make plans?

Now, for some of “the positives” about babies:

They smell wonderful – most of the time.

When they smile, it melts the heart.

When they laugh, the world laughs.

Their skin is softer than anything else on earth.

They are curious, easily delighted and often silly – free entertainment.

They seem to love unconditionally.

Can you tell that I was never a Mom? Babies are wonderfully mysterious to me...so much tied up in a tiny bundle of wiggle.

At Christmas, I often wonder about how and why God decided to bring us the gift of his Son in the form of a baby. After all, God has the power to do anything – and with my experience (or non-experience) with babies, it’s an amazing fact to me that Jesus came to us as a helpless, dependent and unpredictable human being who needed food, care and love *just like all of us*.

God must have known that it would be good for Jesus to be born human and to grow up like other children – to have tickle fights with brothers and sisters, to enjoy a fresh apricot on a summer day, to squabble like other kids in the neighborhood over some game.

God must have wanted this Son to learn about real life – to grow into adolescence and know the challenges of puberty even in those days – maybe even to experience young love and a first kiss.

God probably also thought Jesus should learn a trade as young man – perhaps he worked alongside his father Joseph in the carpentry field, carefully measuring and cutting wood for a table or chair. After a long, hard day, maybe they went together to a local gathering place for men for a cool drink and some leisurely talk. Years later, Jesus would spend lots of time with twelve men – he needed to know how men got along.

And, since young Jesus also lived with his mother and perhaps a sister or two, I believe God wanted him to know the ways of women; how they respond with emotions in a different way, how they tend to instinctively provide for the needs of others, how they listen with their hearts; skills Jesus would need as he brought peace and hope to the lonely and empty ones he encountered on his journey years later.

Then, there had to be times when Jesus interacted with the people of his town as he grew older – he didn't live separately or cloistered from the rabbi and priests, the food vendors and shopkeepers, the village fool, prostitute or drunkard. I'm pretty sure Jesus had exposure to all types of folks in his world – and with each encounter, he puzzled over how they fit into the larger picture of what he would be doing once he took to the road in service of the Father.

These life-lessons must have burned deeply in the heart of Jesus, because we know from Scripture that he lived among and spent time with wealthy, influential people – and lowlife tax collectors - and destitute widows – and even ladies of questionable background. We know Jesus took to the seas with fishermen, and we also know that Jesus celebrated feasts and weddings – maybe he even told a joke or two and toasted the newlyweds.

Jesus didn't exclusively attach himself to any one kind of person or group of people – he managed, in thirty-three short years of life, to socially, politically, spiritually and purposefully invade the space of many different types of people – all in the name of his Father, God, who was his example and influence.

Jesus was born among us for a reason – and I can't help but think that God, in the wisdom only God can have, decided that Jesus needed to know all of humanity – in all kinds of situations – so that he could develop the empathy and strength he'd need later on when he was called upon to minister to crowds of people - so that he could understand what we all go through in our lives as days go by - and so he could teach us how to live through those days when things go incredibly well or horribly wrong.

For, not only would Jesus provide the ultimate gift one day, and die for our sins – but, because he probably lived a normal life, he would also give us insight and hope and good advice about how to treat each other – and about how we need to call on God for all things.

All we have to do is pay attention and follow the directions!

Tonight, we celebrate Jesus. Born a helpless baby who grew to become a gentle powerhouse of a man; for everyone, by the Grace of God. Amen.