

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lena, IL – 24 December 2022**  
**Christmas Eve - Year A**

**Psalm: 96**

**1st Lesson: *John 1:1-14***

**2nd Lesson: *Isaiah 9:2-7***

**3rd Lesson: *Isaiah 11:1-10***

**4th Lesson: *Luke 1:26-38***

**5th Lesson: *Luke 2:1-20***

**Meditation - *Vicar Thomas J. Mosbø***

A small God. A fragile God. A vulnerable God.

In our pains and our sorrows, in our weakness and our worries and our weariness, we cry out to the most powerful being in or beyond the universe: “God, you can do anything. You made every minute atom and every vast galaxy. You set our hearts beating and made us yearn for all that is good. You are almighty, all knowing, always present. Why don’t you do something to help us?” And what answer do we receive?

To us a child is born. To us a son is given. A baby. A helpless God, in the arms of a young, inexperienced mother and a step-father.

So when Mary held the baby Jesus in her arms, he was a new-born with tiny fingers, the softest skin, eyes that couldn’t yet focus. Totally helpless, dependent on her for his food, his warmth, his care; lest he starve, or freeze, or die from illness.

We may know the responsibilities of raising a child, of nurturing, protecting, and guiding that child. We may experience the worries of watching a child playing in a dangerous place, making choices that will affect him his whole life, growing up and living his own life.

But can we imagine the enormity of the weight of the responsibilities or the worries of raising the Son of God? Mary had said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”, and Joseph had accepted the angel’s word not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife.

But when reality presented itself to them in the form of a precious infant, who could not yet speak although he was the eternal Word of God, what must they have felt? Mary would soon be told that a sword would pierce her heart on account of this child, and Joseph would have to take his family into exile as refugees in order to protect him. What must it have been like for them to know that they had been given the task of caring for the vulnerable child who was God incarnate?

There were angels - angels to announce his birth, guide his step-father, warn his family of danger; and angels to sing to shepherds in the countryside - just imagine the sound of that song! But the angels never seem to have stepped in directly to save Jesus from danger. His step-father had to act on their warnings, and it was his responsibility to preserve his son's life, the life of the Son of God.

A dependent God, a human God. A foolish God?

When the time would come for him to grow into who he would be, there would still be questions: "Why don't you do something to help us?" And he would do some things. He would heal some people of their illnesses, give some people sight who had been blind, and even raise a few people from death. And he would teach. He would teach all of us how to love God and love one another. And he would send the Holy Spirit to help us.

But he wouldn't step in and end oppressive governments. He wouldn't make those who were evil stop doing evil things. These may be the kinds of things we expect a God who is all-powerful "ought" to do, but the babe of Bethlehem reveals to us a God who does not prevent people from making their own bad choices, but rather a God who through his own vulnerability would allow evil to do its worst to him, even to kill him, and yet then he would be resurrected.

And Jesus would promise that the day would come when there would be no more death, disease, or danger. And his ability to raise the dead, and to rise from death himself, proved that yes, he does have the power to make that day come. And so on this night, we celebrate the birth of the vulnerable God.

Nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
The cross be borne for me, for you;

What child is this?

The Word made flesh,  
The babe, the son of Mary.

Amen!

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