

Discipleship Moment

Sermon Text: Luke 1:39-45

Have you ever heard a song or read a book and it sends a shock through your mind and body? Maybe it was *The Godfather* (one of my favorite movies) during that scene when, in a room full of talking people, the camera slowly zooms closer to Michael Corleone's face as he stares off silently and makes the decision to be part of the criminal family's enterprise. Or it could be *Saving Private Ryan* when the brave soldiers storm Normandy beach in the opening scenes when the camera pans around and you are faced with the bloody, gut-wrenching reality of war and death. Or it could be the first time you read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and the climactic face-off between Harry and Professor Quirrell (the puppet of Voldemort). Harry accidentally touches Quirrell and Quirrell begins to physically burn and we realize that Harry's Mother's sacrificial love is, in fact, the source of power for Harry to defeat evil (hello Gospel message!). The first time this happened to me was the young adult novel *The Giver* by Lois Lowery; when the young protagonist, Jonas, realizes that the world that looks like it is utopian is in fact quite broken and he must make the decision to live by virtue rather than meeting the expectations of society.

The most important time that I experienced this feeling: this shockwave, was when I was in college and realized for the first time the implications of God's incarnation. Incarnation is our word for "becoming physical." When God sent his Son as a human, it was God becoming physical. Think about that. The God whose presence killed the priests who accidentally touched the Ark of the Covenant (the place of God's presence), the God whose magnificent presence struck people down in fear *became flesh*. Jesus was *fully* God and *fully* man. That is why Jesus can save us. Because he became one of us. He became the *best human*, the *ideal human*. He hungered, and was tired, and wiped his rear after relieving himself, and hugged others. He is one of us. God moved into our neighborhood. And through Jesus' reconnection of human and divine now we, as his people, can partake in the same kind of life. We are bodies; but now we are filled with the Holy Spirit and can live empowered to have peace, love, and forgive.

This is the messy, gross, shocking truth of God's becoming human. He joined us in the disgusting work of being a body and having human relationships in order to save us from ourselves.

Praise God for his deep love for us, and let us celebrate and worship Christ today and tomorrow well.

I leave you with this poem by James Matthew Wilson
*There, in the hay's warmth and the steaming sty,
The Word born to the frailty of flesh
Cracks our mortality with a weak cry
And seals our life within his endlessness.*

*The Word born to the frailty of flesh,
He lies wrapped in the cloths of mystery,
And seals our life within his endlessness,
In infant finitude eternity.*

*He lies wrapped in the cloths of mystery,
The straining of small limbs, unopened eyes.
In infant finitude, eternity
And love invisible we recognize.*

*The straining of small limbs, unopened eyes
Draw us from torchlight to the light of glory,
And love invisible we recognize
Shaping the child's dream of the Christmas story.*

*Draw us from torchlight to the light of glory.
Crack our mortality with a weak cry,
Shaping the child's dream of the Christmas story,
Here in the hay's warmth and the steaming sty.*

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once.

1. Read Luke 1-2 (if you are with your family, read it out loud). Think about the birth of Jesus.
2. Sing hymns and carols with your family.
3. After all the craziness of Christmas morning. Spend some time in silence praying and praising God for his work.
4. Before a meal this week, recite the Apostle's Creed.
5. Pray everyday this week
6. Read Luke 1-2 again.