

Sermon
Christmas Day 2025
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa
The Reverend Victoria Scott
Readings: Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12) John 1:1-14

Last night, we gathered in the dark.

We lit candles. We told the ancient story again. We remembered that God does not come to erase the darkness, but to be with us in it. We remembered that God comes not in power, but in vulnerability. Not as force, but as love embodied.

And now, on Christmas Day, there is a question:

What happens next?

Christmas is not only about a birth long ago. It is about what that birth sets in motion — in the world, and in us.

This morning we hear from John's Gospel — a Gospel full of mystery and poetry, light and paradox. John takes us all the way back to the beginning: *In the beginning was the Word.* Before manger and

angels, before Mary and Joseph, before time itself — there is God.

Creative. Speaking. Alive with energy and love.

And then John gives us one of the most amazing sentences in all of Scripture:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

God moves from cosmos to cradle. All the energy of creation. All the love that called light out of darkness. All the wisdom that shaped stars and seas — gathered into a human life. Into flesh. Into breath. Into vulnerability. Not to watch us from a distance. Not to fix the world *for* us. But to be *with* us.

Advent taught us to pay attention to that word: **with**. God chooses with instead of for. God is with Mary in her courage. With Joseph in his fear. With shepherds in the night. With a child who will grow, and love, and suffer, and die.

And Christmas Day asks us to linger there — not at the manger, but at the meaning. Because if God chooses with, then incarnation does not end in Bethlehem. It continues.

Meister Eckhart puts it this way:

“What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture?”

This, Eckhart says, is the fullness of time — when Christ is born **in us**.

That may sound overwhelming, until we remember how God chose to come. God did not come through certainty. God did not come through strength or control. God came through relationship. Through presence. Through trust. Through love embodied in ordinary human life.

Which means that giving birth to Christ in our time does not require perfection. It requires presence.

It looks like what Joseph showed us in Advent — not fearlessness, but courage. Not hardness, but softness. Not withdrawal, but staying.

The world tells us that to survive we must harden ourselves. That to be strong we must pretend we are not afraid. That distance is safer than intimacy. But Christmas tells the truth: God comes through softness. God comes through vulnerability. God comes through people who are willing to be with one another — even when it costs them something.

Bruce Cockburn sings about Christmas this way:

*"There's a future shining in a baby's eyes
Like a stone on the surface of a still river
Driving the ripples on forever."*

That baby is Jesus. But those ripples — they are not finished. They move through us — every time we choose to stay present instead of pulling away. Every time we choose compassion instead of

indifference. Every time we refuse cruelty — quietly, faithfully — as Joseph did. Every time we risk love in a world that tells us not to. We become part of the incarnation.

God moved from cosmos to cradle — so that divine love could move from cradle into the world, through human hands and voices and choices.

Christmas does not promise that everything will be easy. It promises that we are not alone.

It promises that the light of God's love has a fondness for flesh — for bodies, for lives, for this world exactly as it is: beautiful and broken, hopeful and unfinished.

So on this Christmas Day, the invitation is simple — and demanding:

Stay soft.

Stay present.

Stay with.

Let Christ be born again — not only in sanctuaries and songs, but in the way we live, the way we love, the way we care for one another and for this fragile world.

God is with us. The Word has become flesh. And the light continues to shine.

May it shine in us. May it ripple outward through us. And may we carry it — gently, courageously — into the world God loves. In Jesus' name. Amen.