

WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

Hebrews 2:10-18

December 28, 2025

Perhaps you are aware that there is not one but twelve days of Christmas.

Christmas Day gets the most fanfare. Once the day is past and the gifts are exchanged, our collective eyes turn to New Year's plans and parties. Christkindlmarkt shutters until next year, neighbors begin taking down lights, and we're on to the next thing.

Our Christian ancestors, however, felt that Christmas was so important that they gave us twelve days to focus on the birth of Jesus. The great Reformer, Martin Luther, would preach on Christmas for a full month out of the year. Why?

We know the basics of the story—even Charlie Brown knows it. But like Charlie and his friends, many of us still struggle to understand what it's all about. Why is Christmas such a big deal? What does it mean, and why does it matter?

Our second Scripture lesson is from Hebrews. It's a deep cut, not your typical Christmas text, but it gets at these questions. Hebrews has been called a sermon to a congregation in the parking lot. The preacher is addressing people who are heading out the door, ready to throw in the towel and leave church behind. They've lost hope—precisely because they've lost sight of Jesus. And so, the author of Hebrews aims to fix their eyes squarely back on Him, the author and finisher of their faith.

Hear these words from Hebrews 2:10–18:

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers

and sisters, saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me." Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Please pray with me:

Lord, teach us to seek You. We cannot seek You unless You teach us or find You unless You show Yourself to us. Let us seek You in our desire, let us desire You in our seeking. Let us find You by loving You, let us love You when we find You. Amen.

This prayer was originally penned about a thousand years ago by a great theologian of the church named Anselm. Anselm and his friends also wrestled with the true meaning of Christmas. The result of his wrestling is a book called *Why God Became Human*.

It's the Christmas question: What is Christmas all about? Why did God become human? To what end, and what difference does it make?

To get at these questions, in a way similar to the beginning of John's Gospel, the preacher of Hebrews

begins at the beginning—of everything. Before we zoom into the manger, we zoom way out. In the beginning, God made all things through God's eternal Son, through whom and for whom all things were made, and who continues to sustain all things.

And then our preacher launches into it—Houston, we have a problem.

Jesus came to save us, which means we need help—and not just a little help, not just getting our act together. Humans have a God-sized problem. We feel it in our bones, and it shows up everywhere: on the news, in our divisions, in our apathy, in our anger, in our aggression, in our insatiable hunger for more even when we've gotten everything on our Christmas list, in our fickle attempts to do what we know we should, in our deepest questions about suffering and the meaning of life, and in our fear of our inevitable death.

The preacher of Hebrews says that Jesus is precisely the right "fit" to address these problems. He alone is the right person for the job. Why? Because, being God, He is up to the task, and being human, He is on the ground with us in these problems. For the deepest and most intractable problems, two things are needed: power and proximity. This is precisely what we have in Jesus.

Jesus is not the kind of powerful person who sits in an ivory tower, contemplating and solving problems at a safe distance with the stroke of a pen or an impressive delegation. He is the kind of King who sees us in our pain and poverty, leaves behind His crown and chariots, and out of deep love for us actually becomes a peasant so that He might really, truly be with us—to see and experience our pain *with* us.

He does all this so that He can truly say, in a way no one else can, "I know what you're going through, and I'm here to help." This satisfies our deepest need in suffering: to know that we are not alone, that someone understands what we are going through because they've been there. And because that someone is God-with-us, it is the help we truly need.

This is where we zoom into the Christmas story. God is in the manger, born like us in every way,

even—and especially—in our weakness, in the fragility and dependency of an infant, so that He can help us in every way.

That baby is the answer to our questions and our cries for help. Not a Hallmark card, not a pep talk, not getting our act together, but the Son of God—through whom all things came into being—entering the scene to set all things right.

How He did this, and how He does this, is hard to grasp and, without eyes of faith, impossible to see. We feel this when we ask, "Where is God in all of this?" or "Why doesn't God just snap His fingers and fix things?" The theologians call this "the hidden God." Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls this God in the manger and God on the cross. God acts in ways that run counter to human expectations.

We look for power in high places, but the Almighty comes to us in the low country. The cradle and the cross both reveal God under contradictory conditions: power through weakness, perfection through suffering.

What makes Jesus perfect, according to the preacher of Hebrews, is precisely the fact that He has aligned Himself with our condition—frail, vulnerable, and subject to suffering of all kinds. Our version of perfection is much different. We imagine something flawless, awe-inspiring, aesthetically unmatched. Most artistic representations we have of Jesus reflect that. We place Him in a beautiful, bow-wrapped box.

But Christmas tells us to look outside the box. Don't look high—look low. If you are looking for God only in what is impressive, you will miss Him in the manger. As the hymn says, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity." In revealing Himself to us, He veils Himself. The One through whom all things were created is hidden as a dependent and unknown baby from nowhere special.

God veils His power in weakness, and His glory is hidden in anonymity. It is not found in the social power of influencers, the professional power of business titans, or the political power of presidents. It is found in the makeshift cradle, on the cross, and in the dark corners of life.

This is why Jesus says, “whatever we do to the least of these, you do unto me.” This is not hyperbole; it is His story then and now. Jesus is born in squalor, met not with honor but treated as worthless. If we are looking for God, this is where we will find Him. Carl Jung was right—we can’t see God because we don’t look low enough.

For those who feel inferior or struggle with shame, hear this: Jesus is not ashamed to call you brothers and sisters. The Son of God proudly associates Himself with you before the throne of grace.

This is what it means to say that Jesus is our high priest. In the Bible, a priest is someone who advocates and offers a sacrifice before God on our behalf. That Jesus is our high priest means He is not just God-with-us; He is God-for-us. He is our advocate.

Not only is He our advocate, but the sacrifice He offers on our behalf begins decisively at Christmas. Christmas shows us what God sacrifices—what God gives up—in order to be with us and for us. The word sacrifice can get lost in religious noise. It sounds can sound pretentiously pious. Very simply, a sacrifice is giving up something valuable in the present, for some future benefit.

The benefit is all ours—he gave us his life, his love, so that we would have a direct line to God, who sees us, not from afar, but from within. He has led the way out of our darkness from within. The first sacrifice made by Jesus was made when the One through whom all things were made, who sustains all things, was born in a manger, so that he would be truly with us and for us. For those who feel weak, grieving, accused, ashamed, or afraid, know that Jesus shares your lot. And because it is Jesus who shares it, He breaks its power.

This is why we are called to fix our eyes not on outward appearances but on Him. Christmas invites us to look not to the mansion but to the manger, not to the boastful but to the baby—where all pretensions fade, where true glory is revealed, and where true help is found.