

Ah...

- **The Story**
- The **well worn, much adored story**
- Of the **nativity of Jesus**

This past Sunday, the **kids enacted** this story

- In our **annual Christmas pageant**

Now it's **not hard to imagine** what a **cute fest** it was

- **Trouble for me** was I was seated **behind the altar**
- Unable **see all the action**

But **what I could see** though

- Were **the faces** of the **large crowd**
- **Watching** as the **timeless story** unfolded.

What I saw on **those faces**

- Experiencing the **Jesus story**
- For the **umpteenth thousandth time**
- Was **the look** of **unfettered joy**.

It **never gets old**.

So tonight, I hope

- You can **put it all down**
- And **experience** some **child-like joy**;
- That you **can revel** in **the Carols** and **the good company**

- And **marvel one more time**
- At **greatest story** ever told.

But if you think about the **holy duo** of **Mary** and **Joseph**,

- This **birth** that we **so memorialize**,
- It sure didn't **go smoothly** for their little family, **did it?**

Not being **at home** but in a **far off city**,

- Having **to begin** their **life together** in a **barn**.

This was **certainly not** how Joseph or Mary

- Would have **drawn it up**.

And **How about** Mary and Joseph's **assignment**

- To be parents of the **one who's Kingdom**
- Will **have no end?**

"Inadequate" does not seem a **strong enough** word

- To **describe** how the couple **must have felt** that night

I had a conversation with **someone** this week

- Who was **struggling**

He and his family **find themselves**

- This Christmas in a **difficult place**
- That **didn't seem to jibe**
- **Let's have a perfect Christmas** sentiment
- That **Madison Avenue** sells us.

The idea of “**a normal Christmas**” came up.

- We had a **good chuckle** at a **commercial** we’d both seen
- You **know the one...**
- Someone **stepping out** into the gentle **snowflakes**
- To find a **Lexus** wrapped in a big **red bow**

I think we **all** share, at **least a little**, in **Mary and Joseph’s**

- Feelings of **inadequacy** this time of year.
- Our house isn’t **nice enough** or **big enough**
- Or our **gifts** are **lacking**;
- Or we’re **just short** on **holiday spirit**.

And we **find ourselves** all at **abruptly different places**.

- Some of us **might be on** a **mountain top**

But I would imagine that **most of us**

- Are **encountering Christmas** from a place
- That is **decidedly less than perfect**.

Between

- **Our bodies, relationships, our finances,**

The **truth is** that **pretty much any day-**

- **We’re all** going **to be dealing with stuff-**
- Stuff that **definitely** does **not add up**
- To finding a **Lexus wrapped in big red bow**.

And this is **precisely why**

- God came to us in such a **humble way,**
- Into **decidedly less than perfect conditions,**
- So that we might **be able** to **receive** him

The gospels **don't claim** any special,

- **Extraordinary power** for the **infant Jesus:**
- He gives no **blessing from the crèche,**
- **Performs** no **miracles.**

Jesus entered the world

- Like **each one of us, vulnerable**
- To **hunger** and **thirst,** to **cold,** to **infection** and **accident.**

He is **simply a baby** like any other **baby,**

- Who cries and is **dependent upon others**
- To **be fed** and **cared for** and **held** and **loved.**

Folks...The Christmas story

- Is a story about **all** of us **receiving**
- That which we **most need:**
- **Love –**
- **Deep, strong, unconditional love.**

The **Christmas story** is alsoabout

- How God so **loved** -- and **loves** -- us
- That he asks us to be **partners** in **loving the world**.

God asks us, like **Joseph and Mary**,

- To **learn** to **hear** and to **notice**
- The **spoken** and **unspoken** cries
- Of **all who need to be cared for**.
- And **then**, to **respond** in **love**.

Mary and Joseph,

- **Despite** all the **hardships**,
- **Despite** all the **imperfection surrounding them**,
- They met **the baby Jesus where they were**
- And made a **loving place** for him.

I guess if there is a **question being asked** in **all of this** it is:

- Amid **the messiness** of our lives we,
- Are **we** prepared to make a **home** for Jesus?
- Will we **make room** for **Jesus** in our lives?

The **truth is** that

- Jesus is **in** our world **now**
- **He's come**.

And his **unquenchable brand of love**

- Will be here **tomorrow**,
- And the **next** day, and **beyond**.

He will be in the **giggles** of **children tomorrow morning**;

- He will be in the **cries** of **families**
- Who've been **broken apart** by **poverty** or **despair**;
- He will be in the **sigh** of an **elderly** person
- Who **finds themselves alone** and **frightened**;
- He'll be **in the laughter** of people coming **together in love**.

Don't **be deceived**:

- God **is not** looking **for perfection**;
- **Is not looking** to **meet us only** on our **mountaintops**
- But eager to **meet us right where we sit**

And **hear this**:

- The **birth of Jesus** our **humble King**, happening **as it did**
- Tells us, that **beyond a doubt**

That **God is not offended** by **the primitiveness** of **our stable**

- All God wants is **a home to come into**.
- A place to **grow** and be **nurtured**.

That is the story that **we celebrate tonight**.

- **Wherever we are-**
- **There is God-**
- **Being born for us.**

A **“Normal Christmas” – is there such a thing?**

The **birth** of the **Christ child**

- **Will never be convenient**
- But **nonetheless Christ comes**
- **May you receive him now.**

Amen.