

# Christmas |s...

## Christmas Day

Matthew 1:18-25  
College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa

Rev. Todd B. Freeman  
December 25, 2011

Christmas is... Christmas is simply one of the most wonderful days of the year. Think about it. For a child, there is simply nothing that compares to its sense of excitement and almost unbearable anticipation of waiting for Christmas morning. And even as adults we can still get swept up in the wonder and joy of the season.

For so many of us, part of that wonder continues to come in remembering the birth of an infant in Bethlehem so many centuries ago. But to let this day be *only* about that birth is to lose sight of the true miracle of Christmas. The focus of this holy season can too easily slip into sentimentality that turns it into a time of just "feeling good" about ourselves and others. Few preachers, though, including myself, want to undervalue the kindness and generosity that swell up and overflow in the lives of millions of people at this time of the year.

The gift we are being offered at Christmas, however, is quite a bit more profound than just feeling good, or even feeling kind and generous. For it has been revealed that the birth of God's anointed One changed creation itself in a fundamental way. **Because of this particular birth, we are able to understand life not only from a different perspective, we can also live life in a different way.**

We honor the birth of Jesus because we know that it is because of this *particular* baby, through his life and ministry and teachings, that we now understand that all human beings are capable of living in unity with God. Before the incarnation, before this birth, people perceived God only as other, as one outside and apart from us. After the incarnation, after this birth, people – including us – could now know God as Emmanuel: God *with* us, God fully present *within* human life.

**Being a follower of Jesus Christ isn't only about feeling peaceful or loving or compassionate toward others, as important as those things are; it is also about living life in such a way that others see God manifested through our words and actions. Like Jesus, we too are called to embody and reflect God's love, forgiveness, peace, patience, hope, joy, and sense of equality and justice.** We can become people of peace, of shalom, not just because we *feel* something, but because we *are* something and therefore, *do* something.

Christmas is, then, at its most basic meaning, not just about *feelings*, it is about *becoming* – becoming who we are created to be. The infant Jesus *became* the man who touched and healed with God's power; he became the one who broke down the barriers that separated people from one another; he became the prophet who demonstrated the forgiving love of God; he became the person who claimed as friends the outcasts and the broken among society.

The path Jesus took is the gift we are offered on this day of the incarnation. We remember that *our* human flesh, by God's grace and through our commitment to our baptismal vows, is part of Christ's body. We are invited on this Christmas Day, and actually every day of our lives, to become all that Jesus was and is – with God's help and the presence of God's Spirit that dwells within us.

"For unto us a child is born." That is what Christmas is!

Amen.