

There was a man who didn't believe in God, and he was quick to let others know his opinion. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife, who was a Christian asked him to come to the Christmas Eve service with her and their children. He refused, saying, "Christmas is nonsense! What kind of God comes to earth as a man? What unrealistic humility. It's ridiculous!" So she and the children left while he stayed home.

A little while later, the howling winds called him to look outside where the gentle snow was turning into a blizzard. The thickness of the snow made it hard to see. He returned to his chair to relax by the crackling fire. Then he heard a loud thump. Something had hit the window. Then another thump. He looked out the window, but couldn't see anything in the blinding snow. So he put on his heavy coat and ventured outside to see what was making the noise. Several yards from his house he saw a flock of wild geese flapping and aimlessly confused. Apparently, they had been flying south for the winter when they got caught in the snowstorm. They were stranded on his farm looking for food and shelter. Evidently, a couple of them had been attracted to the light from his window.

The man felt sorry for the geese and wanted to help them. The barn would be a great place for them. It was warm and safe. So he walked over to the barn and opened the doors wide. He hoped the geese would notice the open barn and go inside. He waited, but the geese just fluttered around aimlessly. They didn't seem to notice the barn- let alone realize the safety available. Then the man tried to shoo them into the barn, but that just seemed to scare them, and they moved further away. He went into the house and returned with bread crumbs to make trail leading to the barn. The geese still didn't catch on. He was getting frustrated as all his attempts to help were failing. Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn where they would be warm and safe.

He exclaimed, "Why don't they follow me? Can't they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm?" He deliberated for a moment and realized that these wild geese would never follow a human. He thought to himself, "If only I were a goose, then I could save them."

Then he had an idea. He went into the barn, got one of his own geese, and carried it in his arms as he circled around behind the flock of wild geese. He then released it. His goose flew through the flock and straight into the barn and one by one the wild geese followed it to safety.

He stood silently for a moment as the words he had spoken a few minutes earlier replayed in his mind: "If only I were a goose, then I could save them!" Then he thought about what he had said to his wife earlier. "Why would God want to be like us? That's ridiculous!" -1-

Suddenly it all made sense. That is what God HAD done. We are like the geese- blind, lost, and perishing. God became human to show us the way to salvation. The man realized the meaning of Christmas. He stood in the midst of the storm with an unusual peace. He knew why Jesus was born. He fell to his knees in the snow, and prayed his first prayer: "Thank you, God, for coming in human form to get me out of the storm!"

Getting us out of the storm.....giving us an alternative to the sense of despair and helplessness we so often experience. Two thousand plus years ago God sent a small baby to be born in a stable warmed by animals so that we could have someone like us to follow.

But instead we place a beautiful picture setting in our minds and on our Christmas cards thus forgetting all about the fact that it truly was a drafty barn filled with animal sounds and smells where our Lord Jesus Christ was born. It seems we, too, are saying, "How ridiculous! Why would God want to be like us?" We work rather hard to keep that scene as it is recorded in Scripture- pure and clean and somehow at arms length.

But God intended it otherwise. Jesus- a part of God- was truly sent so long ago to live on this earth as human as we are- sin excepted. Jesus experienced the love of family and friends, suffered his parent's scolding for worrying them, sorrow at the loss of a loved one, as well as ridicule and physical cruelty. He gave his life in exchange for our sins. Then gloriously he conquered death so that we need not fear it.

Hard to believe? Yes! But what is our alternative? Do we stay in the storms of life struggling day to day and ultimately die without hope? Do we falter aimlessly rather than open our hearts and arms to the hope, safety and shelter of a loving God? God sent someone like us to show us the way, dare we cleanse the picture and put it on our refrigerators rather than in thankful hearts? We have received the opportunity for a precious gift given to us simply because God loves us. God simply loves us and by sending the Christ in human form, attempted to get through our thick minds the way to eternal life. We must never lose sight of the reason Christ came into this world was because God loves and cares for us. May we not be like the geese fluttering aimlessly about in the midst of a storm rather than place our lives safely in the hands of a loving God.

With the Lord's Supper, we focus on the true message of Christmas- that of Christ's coming to this earth to bring forgiveness of our sins- without questions and the promise of eternal life. Let us take a deep breath, draw in the many gifts of the Holy Spirit and in this moment as we share the Lord's Supper remember and be grateful for the real reason we celebrate Christmas.

Karen Houtman 12-24-2020