

God is big - really big. But you know that. The thing is, on Christmas it is helpful to remember just how big God is. God is bigger than the universe, if such a thing is possible. God is bigger than time. God is bigger than our imaginations can conceive.

Sometimes people ask me, "Do you really believe God created the world in 6 days like it says in Genesis?" And I want to say, "You've missed the point of the story!" The point is not days or timeframe or anything like that. The point is the unimaginable power and majesty of God. God created out of nothing. God spoke and creation happened. The Genesis creation accounts are simply an attempt to put into words God's power which is bigger than any words can capture.

My one seminary professor, Dr. Richard Nelson, used to say that the Bible is best understood as humanity's attempt to grasp the ungraspable, an attempt to put into words that which cannot be put into words.

My son often reminds me of a quote from Carl Sagan, "If you truly want to make an apple pie from scratch you have to start by inventing the universe."

Though we humans may think we are powerful, with our big trucks and trains and ships and atomic weapons and enormous particle accelerators, we really aren't. In the real scope of the universe we are nothing more than the scurrying of ants on a little rocky planet, third from an ordinary star at the fringe of an average galaxy among countless billions of galaxies.

The most powerful and insightful realization we humans can make is that we are neither intelligent nor powerful.

Heidi and I started the service with the poem "The Coming of God" by Ann Weems. It reminds us of God's power and limitlessness. God can do whatever God wants to do whenever God wants to do and wherever God wants to do it.

Let me read another poem by Ann Weems to you; this one called, "The Plastic Angel".

Our crèche set came complete with stable
and a plastic angel.
Small, not at all to scale,
the white-garbed creature with uncertain wings
was obviously and afterthought,

thrown in to complete the set,
 otherwise ceramic and hand painted...
Unless, of course, this angel was a last-minute substitute
 for one which was irresistible to the packer.
In that case, somewhere I have an irresistible ceramic angel,
 dressed gloriously in red,
 kneeling of flying on somebody else's coffee table
 even now
 as I unwrap the plastic angel.
If I could ever bring myself to throw away an angel,
 it would be this one,
 this one with no redeeming features.
And yet, each year as I unwrap the plastic angel,
 I hesitate again to pitch this celestial messenger.
I'm reminded of my own lack of glory,
 my own plastic attempts at celebrating Christmas,
 my own feeble annunciations,
 and once again I place this bit of plastic
 over the stable.
If the plastic angel
 can get this far,
 perhaps there's a place in Bethlehem town
 for me.

 Using similarly poetic images the gospel writer John
captures the irony of Christmas. We'll be reading these well
known words by candlelight later, but let me give two excerpts
now. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All
things came into being through him, and without him not one
thing came into being. What has come into being in him was
life... .. And the Word became flesh and lived among us..."

 Oh what is God thinking that God the creator would take on
the form of the created? Why would a limitless creator God

unfettered by all limits and rules and regulations choose to become a simple limited human being?

My colleague the Rev. Gail Swanson writes, "At Christmas - whether we can picture it or not, the world got a God with skin on. A God in the flesh, who can feel with us

- feel the joy of a loving touch
- the hurt of rejection
- the anguish of a broken relationship
- the ache at the sight of a loved one suffering
- the numbing grief of standing in the cemetery.

You know the Christmas story well. We read it just a couple minutes ago. Was this God-made-flesh content to come in adult form... just show up? Even to come as a helpless baby, was God content to come to a modern hospital with all the safeties and conveniences?

Much has been made of Syria lately with the civil war and especially the refugee crisis. You may have noted that Syria shows up in the Christmas story and many have noted that Joseph and Mary were on the road traveling from Nazareth - a town only about 15 miles from the modern Syrian border. I'm stretching a bit when I say this, but it makes the point vivid - Why would

God be born basically to Syrian refugee family uprooted from their home because of government actions?

God, you are all powerful! Can't you think of something better to be born into?

Hear these thoughts about Christmas from Barbara Brown Taylor:

This is the mystery we come to worship today, the mystery of the incarnation, the mystery of a God so in love with us that he came to be one of us, and it is something we know so well that we are apt to forget that we do not understand it at all. If we did, we would probably behave more like Sharon, a five year old girl who, when asked, "Do you know who the baby was?" whispered, "The baby was God" and then leaped onto the air, twirled around and dove into a sofa, where she covered her head with pillows. It was the only proper response to the good news of the incarnation, and those of us without pillows over our heads may wonder if we have really heard the news yet...

So that is the first part of today's message: This baby was a love-child, in whom God shows us just how far he will go to be held in our arms. The second part of the message is that in doing so, God has forever blurred the distinction between the holy and the ordinary. Choosing flesh, he chose the lowest human common denomination, and in doing so, left us no escape from his presence. God showed us that flesh and blood, dirt and sky, life and death were good enough for him. More than that he hallowed them, made them holy by taking part in them, and left us nothing on earth we can dismiss and trivial to him..."

In all of God's infinite power it is God's delight to be one with us. It is God's delight, in God's own playful, creative and loving ways to be with us. God could do anything. So the unimaginably enormous God of all came in a way we can understand.

By coming in the lowest of the low, he has left us no place to escape. God's playful creativity will meet us in the meanest of circumstances in the most depressed and hopeless of states. There God is. Perhaps God won't turn all immediately into fun and games, but God's nourishing life-affirming love is there always.

May you whisper, "The baby was God" and then leap into the air, twirl around and dive into a sofa where you cover your head with pillows and giggle to the tips of your toes at discovering you are so loved by one so mighty. Amen