

Beliefs: What does the Incarnation mean to you?



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The incarnation, Christ's life on earth as the son of God and son of Mary, fully human and fully divine, is central to the Christian faith.

When Christ is born, God becomes a tangible reality in our midst. God in Christ shares fully with us what it means to be human. Jesus is born to a young woman who is not privileged or wealthy, she is not married yet, she lives an ordinary life. And it is the privileged and powerful who most fear Jesus. We might expect those who have so much not to be bothered by the birth of a baby in a small town. But it quickly becomes clear that this is no ordinary child.

In the Gospels, the accounts of Jesus' life, each of the writers take different approaches in mapping out the story of Christ's birth. Together they bring us a narrative of cosmic mystery, of human drama, of unexpected events – which are both thrilling and terrifying. Whilst the season of Christmas in which we celebrate Jesus' birth is rightly full of joyous carols and cute nativity plays of the season, we must be careful not to miss the rest of the story – a story of small voices speaking truth to power, of a world turned on its head, of the seemingly impossible being real, of true strength among those considered most weak.

Throughout his life, Jesus lives under the shadow of threats from those who wish him harm. He is frequently outspoken, faces conflict and at times real danger. In the way that he lives, Jesus provides an example of how God desires that we should live – concern for the poor, feeding the hungry, comforting the sick and distressed, and challenging inequality. Bishop Westcott, who was an Anglican Bishop when Queen Victoria was on the throne, described the incarnation as the 'central event' in the life of the world, believing that in Jesus is demonstrated to us a practical outworking of the message of the Gospels. He said "The Gospel of Christ the Word Incarnate, of God entering into our life, is indeed good tidings: *good tidings to the poor.*"

For me, the incarnation – God as Christ, means I can know and be fully known by a God who is not remote from what it means to be human, who understands our weaknesses and our fears. To me it demonstrates that real power is found where we least expect, that astonishing things can happen to the most 'unlikely' people, and that we can all play our part in making the world a better place. God, in Jesus, comes for our broken world and for us all, to be one with us and for us.