

No other image in our culture says powerlessness like that of a baby. A baby is totally dependent on others for his/her survival.

That may be why one of the most difficult things to grasp in God entering our world is to view Jesus as a dependent, vulnerable and even needy baby. One author reflecting on this mystery/miracle of the incarnation- God taking on human flesh- says that most of us easily leap to the image of Jesus as a mature man. But Jesus didn't come to us as a grown man. In order to fully identify with us, he literally came into the world as we do, born as a dependent, vulnerable child.

But the way Jesus enters and then lives his life is also contrary to the way most of us live our lives. And that will challenge us today in understanding the example of the incarnation and how it informs the way we choose to enter back into our own world.

Like Jesus we are born powerless and dependent; but we don't remain powerless and dependent for long. We assert our power from the moment we learn that crying brings someone running. Likewise, we begin expressing our independence at the age of 2 and continue right on through adulthood.

Powerlessness is not a concept with which we are comfortable. But if we are to model our lives after the example of Jesus entering the world through the miracle of the incarnation then we must be willing to humble ourselves and become servants. Servants available to God. Servants available to others.

Listen to how Paul described Jesus entrance into the world: Philippians 2:3-8

If we are to follow Jesus example for how to enter our world then we must be willing to experience powerlessness and accept terms like humility and servant.

When Mary and Joseph agreed to be the instruments through which God would enter the world both had to humble themselves. In becoming servants Mary and Joseph laid aside their pride, power and position and were willing to suffer humiliation so that they could be used by God.

This humble couple set the example for Jesus as he grew and matured. This earthly example of humility went along well with his heavenly Father's true nature of a servant. (That might be a hard concept to wrap your arms around; but God, while all powerful, expresses his power in a way that is not tyrannical but humble and loving.)

Jesus example of entering into the lives of those he came to redeem, restore and renew began with presence and proximity (the topics of our last two messages). But what set Jesus ministry apart-what exemplified all that he did- can be described with the word powerlessness.

Jesus did not push his way into people's lives or use them for his own gratification. Actually, the reverse was true. People were drawn to Jesus because of his humility and sincerity. Jesus was unlike others who sought to lift themselves up by putting others down. Jesus lifted others by willingly placing them above himself; even those who were considered to be worthless- like the prostitutes and tax collectors.

But even those closest to him still struggled at times with living out the humility they saw in Jesus life.

Later in Jesus ministry he had to fight this battle between power and powerlessness with his disciples. Two disciples, James and John, came to him one day asking for the privilege of sitting to the right and left hand of Jesus. James and John mistakenly believed that Jesus kingdom would be like those of Rome- where those with influence used and abused power. And before anyone else could cuddle up to Jesus and take these places of power, James and John struck first.

Of course the other disciples were not going to let this go without a fight. So listen to Jesus as he teaches his disciples: Mark 10:42-45

The son of man came to serve...Jesus purpose in entering the world was to serve. And disciples of Jesus should likewise enter our world to serve the least, the last and the lost; not those who can serve us.

When Jesus was born he came in the humblest of ways. Think about where Jesus was born; in a feeding trough among the animals. His earthly parents had no means and they were considered by many to be outcasts because of this illegitimate birth. Are you willing to accept that scenario as your way of life? *Are you willing to become nothing so that you can serve the purpose of God?*

How Jesus entered our world says a lot about God; but it should also say a lot about us. In the words of Soren Kierkegaard "Every true follower of Christ must, through his/her own existence, try to express the same fact, that humility and self-denial are inseparable from the Christian life."

So what does all this mean for us as disciples of Jesus? It means that we enter into the lives of others with humility and the same Christ-like attitude of service. It means that we don't see ourselves as better than others and that we don't act like we have all the answers. It means not striking back or pointing out the faults of others. And it means above all else that we overturn the evils and brokenness of this world by living in service to others.

I've shared with you for several weeks our vision statement- the way we live out our mission of loving God and loving others. The first statement in that vision says that we live our faith beyond Sunday.

If we are going to love God and love others then we must live our faith beyond Sunday and that means entering our world intentionally each day with the idea of serving others.

I know that many of you are already serving others locally in regular ways. (Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity) I'd like you to take a moment this morning and on the back of your response card list at least one way that you are serving others in our community.

One reason for seeking that information is to know where you are serving, but we also have people who are always looking for places to serve. You could be a contact to find new places for people to serve. It also helps our mission team as they put together our monthly mission opportunities. Our goal in 2012 is to have all of you participating in hands-on-ministry outside the church. Where you serve may give us new places to look at serving others.

Maybe you are not currently serving others. If that is you may I suggest that you write down on your response card- I'd like to serve... (fill in the blank) Divorce Care 4 Kids needs leader

We've already seen how serving others is changing lives. LAHMBs, Sierra Leone, there are others as well. We want to celebrate how each disciple at Linglestown Life is living their faith beyond Sunday by following Jesus example of entering the world and becoming powerless.

My prayer today is that you will seek out opportunities to serve others in the same way that Jesus did. During this season of giving, may you give the gift of time by reaching out and serving someone else. What you get back may just be the greatest gift you receive this Christmas.