

**From the Pastor's Desk**

*“And his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means “God with us.””*

Matthew 1:23

In Jeremiah 37:17, Zedekiah, the king, asked Jeremiah, “Is there any word from the Lord?” A question asked by many people over many years, asked by people of all ages in all places and at all times. At Christmas, we have the answer. The word of the Lord is a baby found in a manger. God comes to us as one of us, totally vulnerable.

Soren Kierkegaard tells the wonderful story of the love of a king for a maid. It is a story we are all familiar with, where love overcomes all barriers of class, race, and nationality. The king being in love wants to declare that love to the maid, but does not know how to do it. He is the king. She is a maid. Many boundaries and issues separate them. He cannot find the answer inside him, so he calls the palace’s many wise people. Their response is, “Why do you carry on like this? Just insist she be yours. You are the king.” But this was exactly the problem that the king could not resolve within himself. He wanted her love, not her obedience. In exchange for his love, he wanted her love. For nights, the king mulled over his problem until he finally saw the answer: Freedom for the maid to declare her love for him demanded equality with the beloved.

Late one night, the king snuck out of the palace dressed as a peasant and a servant. This is the Christmas story. God leaves His palace, His abode, and comes to us as one of us. Philippians 2 states it so well: “For the divine nature was His from the first; yet He did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made Himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave, bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape, He humbled Himself, and in obedience accepted even death – death on a cross.” Listen also to Paul in 2 Corinthians 8, “For you know how generous our Lord Jesus Christ has been: He was rich, yet for your sake, He became poor, so that through His poverty you might become rich.”

God in the manger is the way Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it. We want God to be strong and take care of us. The way He really does that is to come to us, and in coming to us, He becomes weak so that we can be strong. We often say God is love, but what does that mean? See She does not demand our love. She does come to us, not in our theology or in our dogma, but comes to us as a baby.

As we approach Christmas this year, let us set aside some time to respond to this great love. As it says in that great hymn, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Pastor Bob