

Simplicity



Let Christmas not become a thing
Merely of merchant's trafficking,
Of tinsel, bell and holly wreath
And surface pleasure, but beneath
The childish glamour, let us find
Nourishment for soul and mind.
Let us follow kinder ways
Through our teeming human maze,
And help the age of peace to come
From a Dreamer's martyrdom.

MADELINE MORSE



DAY
1

The Story of the Christ Child

[READING FROM LUKE 1:1-4 MSG]

So many others have tried their hand at putting together a story of the wonderful harvest of Scripture and history that took place among us, using reports handed down by the original eyewitnesses who served this Word with their very lives. Since I have investigated all the reports in close detail, starting from the story's beginning, I decided to write it all out for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can know beyond the shadow of a doubt the reliability of what you were taught.



*The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin
will be with child and will give birth to a son,
and will call him Immanuel.*

ISAIAH 7:14

Dear Lord:

Thank You for coming in the flesh to this world. I can't imagine what it must have been like to leave heaven behind and become one of us. That kind of love is too much for my human mind to take in. It's pure, unselfish, perfect. And You have planted that very kind of love in my heart by the Holy Spirit. Help me each day to incorporate that love into my life, receiving it in its fullness and sending it out to others—freely giving to others what I have freely received. You are an awesome God.

Amen.

REFLECTING UPON THE NAMES OF JESUS

“Immanuel”



All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.”

MATTHEW 1:22–23

GOD WITH US—what a wonderful thought. It is truly the simplicity of the gospel summed up in three little words. Our God was no longer up in heaven looking down on us from on high. He was right here with us, lying in a manger, working with Joseph in the carpenter’s shop, eating fish with His disciples, healing the sick, raising the dead. He was God in the flesh, one of us, living here in our midst. What a miracle of grace that was. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. But Immanuel is still with us through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the hardest thing to remember about Christmas is this: It celebrates the incarnation, not just the nativity. The incarnation is an ongoing process of salvation, while the nativity is the once-for-all-historical event of Bethlehem. We do not really celebrate Christ's *birthday*, remembering something that happened long ago. We celebrate the amazing fact of the incarnation—God entering our world so thoroughly that nothing has been the same since.

As you celebrate Advent this season, make the simple choice to allow God to enter your world—all of it, nothing held back.

Do you see any obstacles in your life that would keep you from opening yourself completely to God?