

## **God: An Introduction**

### **Week Three: Understanding *the Incarnation* through the identity of God**

Starting where we left off:

*John 1:1-3*

“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*”

*Matthew 1:23*

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.”

Jesus is both expansive and fleshy, mystical and alive, spiritual and material (*do you think you could be, too?*)

*John 14: 11-14 (The Message Translation)*

“Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can’t believe that, believe what you see—these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I’m doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I’ve been doing. You can count on it. From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I’ll do it. That’s how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. Whatever you request in this way, I’ll do.”

*Luke 9:12-14 (The Message Translation)*

<sup>12</sup> As the sun set, the Twelve said, “Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the farms or villages around here and get a room for the night and a bite to eat. We’re out in the middle of nowhere.”<sup>13-14</sup> “You feed them,” Jesus said. They said, “We couldn’t scrape up more than five loaves of bread and a couple of fish—unless, of course, you want us to go to town ourselves and buy food for everybody.” (There were more than five thousand people in the crowd.)

*Where have I, we, failed you?*

*Galatians 2:19-21*

<sup>19-21</sup> What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn’t work. So I quit being a “law man” so that I could be *God’s* man. Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer

driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.

<sup>21</sup> Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God’s grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.

*If that’s who God is, then who are you?*

Excerpt from Richard Rohr’s *The Trajectory of Incarnation*

“Our outer world and its inner significance must come together for there to be any wholeness and holiness. The result is both deep joy and a resounding sense of coherent beauty. What was personified in the body of Jesus was a manifestation of this one universal truth: matter is, and has always been, the hiding place for Spirit, forever offering itself to be discovered anew. Perhaps this is what Jesus means when he says, “I am the gate” (John 10:7). Francis of Assisi and his female companion, Clare, somehow knew that the beyond was not really beyond, but in the depths of *here*.

Christ was Plan A from the very beginning, the very first idea in the mind of God, as it were (John 1: 1–4). God, the formless, eternal, and timeless One essentially said I am going to manifest who I am in what we now call physicality, materiality, or the universe. This means that everything you have ever seen with your physical eyes is the mystery of incarnation. The Christian word we give to that is *the Christ*, which comes from the word Messiah, or the Anointed One, used by Jewish people. The Anointed One is the one who would come to reveal what God is doing, everywhere and all the time. For Christians, that became manifested in Jesus of Nazareth. Walter Brueggemann, my favorite scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures, would call this “the scandal of particularity.” [2] God is in a vulnerable newborn baby in a feeding trough. We need to see the mystery of incarnation in one ordinary concrete moment, and struggle with, fight, resist, and fall in love with it there. What is true in one particular place finally universalizes and ends up being true everywhere.”

