

O, the Humanity!  
John 1: 10-18  
December 16, 2007

Ryan Gustafson, our campus ministry coordinator, told me he's heard a lot about Jesus as God, but not much about Jesus as man. We heard about Jesus the King 3 weeks ago. We get Jesus the human today.

How can Jesus be both completely God and completely human? Don't they contradict? How can you be finite and infinite at the same time? How can you know only some things as a human and know all things as God at the same time? It makes sense that you can be one or the other, but not both.

So Christians who want to understand have chosen one or the other. One way is to see that Jesus was a man who was such a good teacher and so loving that he let people execute him unfairly. Therefore, God used him to bring salvation to the world. He was not God, but a good man used by God.

Another way is to see Jesus as God who appeared in human form so people could see him. He was not human, he just looked like it.

The early church had people on both sides. But then they saw that neither way held the fullness of Christ. Neither way completely understood Jesus. So they made the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed to say that he was both.

Something is going on in Jesus Christ that we can't completely understand. So, we take one at a time.

Today let's appreciate the humanity of Jesus.

The Bible says Jesus was born. If he hadn't been completely human, he wouldn't have been born. He would have just showed up. He came out of his mother's body through a painful birth. I saw my two kids enter the world that way. Life starts with struggle and pain, but also joy and amazement.

Jesus was laid in a cow's feed box, a manger. No crib for a bed. He sleeps in the hay. Jesus our brother strong and good was humbly born in a stable rude. The infant holy is also the infant lowly. He was seen by those who bend beneath life's crushing load with painful steps and slow. They rest beside the weary road to hear the angels sing. The pain of poverty.

As a boy, Jesus would have been given a basic education. He learned his father's trade, a carpenter. He had brothers and sisters and likely would have taken over responsibility for the family when his father died. Religion was important in his family and he got education and worship in the synagogue, learning the Jewish law and prophets. He learned there the expectation that God's kingdom was coming soon. It's likely he spent much of his time outdoors as he demonstrated an unusual knowledge and love of nature. He found that many of his religious questions couldn't be answered by his small town local teachers so brought them to the experts at the temple in the religious headquarters, Jerusalem. He was about 12 at the time, 6<sup>th</sup> grade age.

Then Jesus was tempted. Humans are tempted. God isn't tempted.

Then Jesus was baptized by John. We humans need to be baptized. God doesn't need to be baptized.

Jesus sometimes separates himself from God. In Mark 10:18 He says “why do you call me good? Only God is good.”

Mark 13:32 “No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.”

On the cross in Matthew 27:45 he cries out “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” He told his disciples in John 14: 28 “I am going to the Father who is greater than I am.”

A popular song a few years ago asked “What if God was one of us. Just a stranger on the bus trying to make his way home?” We are lonely. What if God were lonely? We are afraid of not making ends meet. We have pain and chemotherapy. What if God was one of us and felt pain and worry and chemotherapy? Jesus is born. God is in the flesh. God has pitched tent with us. Jesus is God with us, one of us, Immanuel.

Praise the Lord, we can hang out with God. We can sit and talk to Jesus like we can sit and talk with our most trusted friend.

The song goes on to say if God was one of us, and were sitting here with us right now, what would we ask if we had just one question? Since God is with us, what will you ask? Why the suffering in the world? Will non Christians go to heaven? Who should I marry? What career should I seek? Why can't I get my husband to believe? Why do the righteous suffer?

Or will you ask “what can I do to help?” “Where are you healing next?”

God is one of us. So ask. So tell him your troubles and ask about his.

Jesus is one of us. He has been through what we live through. He has learned trust and confidence in childhood, just like you. He has learned identity in adolescence, just like you. He has learned his role in life as a young adult and integrity in middle age, just like you. He knows your thrill of victory and agony of defeat. He is a friend who will never leave. He knows our disabilities and our abilities.

This means not only that Jesus goes where we go, but that we go where Jesus goes. To his suffering, and to his glory. We can forgive, we can bring justice, we can heal, we can start a new job, we can overcome the past. We can go where Jesus goes. He is one of us.

It took a human God to save us.

Navy SEALs were performing a covert operation, freeing hostages from a building in some dark part of the world. They flew in by helicopter, got to the compound and stormed into the room where the hostages had been imprisoned for months. The room was filthy and dark. The hostages were curled up in a corner, terrified. When the SEALs entered the room, they heard the gasps of the hostages. They stood at the door and called to the prisoners, telling them they were Americans. But they wouldn't follow. They sat there on the floor and hid their eyes in fear. They were not of healthy mind and didn't believe their rescuers were really Americans.

The SEALs stood there, not knowing what to do. They couldn't possibly carry everybody out. One of the SEALs got an idea. He put down his weapon, took off his helmet, and curled up tightly next to the other hostages, getting so close his body was touching some of theirs. He softened the look on his face and put his arms around them. He was trying to show them he was one of them. None of the prison guards would have done this. He stayed there for a little while until some of the hostages started to look at him, finally meeting his eyes. The Navy SEAL whispered that they were Americans and were there to rescue them. Will you follow us? He said. The here stood to his feet and one of the hostages did the same, then another, until all of them were willing to go. All the hostages ended up safe on an American aircraft carrier.

The decision to follow Jesus is very much like the decision the hostages had to make to follow their rescuer.

Put your hand in the hand of a man. It takes a human God to save us.

Some of our favorite Christmas songs remind us that Jesus was fully human:

234 O Come All Ye Faithful vs. 5

250 Once in Royal David's City vs. 3

256 We Would See Jesus vs. 2

240 Hark the Herald Angels Sing vs. 2