

God sent His Son, born of a woman.

John 1:9-14 & *Galatians 4:4-6*

*God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son.
(John 3:16)*

Here's a story to begin with... It happened a long time ago:
*A Japanese Company buys a machine from a USA manufacturer.
The American company sends it to Japanese
Company.
Telegram from Japanese Company,
"Machine not working; send man to fix it."
American company sends telegram to Japanese Company,
"Sending man to fix it."
American man sends telegram to American company,
"Japanese company won't let me fix it."
On the same day, there is a telegram from the Japanese Company to
the American company, "Man you sent too young; send older man."
American company Owner-manager to the Japanese company,
"Not sending you anyone else; I sent you my son the inventor!"*

I hope you recognise that **this story was really about you and me.** And it is also **about WHO came to us at Christmas.** So many Christmas readings and carols concentrate on the Babe in the manger, that we can lose sight of **WHO it is that God sent.** And John makes it very clear. He begins his gospel by speaking about the Word who existed from the beginning with God – and **who was fully God.** He speaks of all creation as having been made through him, the Word.

If we go to v.14 we see that **"The Word became flesh"**, so we are sure that John is speaking about Jesus. Jesus is both fully GOD from all eternity, and fully MAN from his birth in Bethlehem, and this now to all eternity as well. A good comment on this truth comes in Paul's letter to the Philippians, 2:8-11, where he says of Jesus, "Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!"

You see – **God the Word freely chose to become like us** in every respect (except for sin). Jesus was a REAL MAN – and still is! –

because God raised him from death, never to die again! But he is also fully GOD. HOW, we cannot understand, but the gospels help us to understand its truth. So, let's be clear – Jesus' two natures are not in any way mixed, but were and are distinct and perfect (even if, while Jesus was a man on earth, his glory as God was veiled, and he chose to limit himself)! This is mind-boggling – but we need to hold on to this truth, for the infinite value of Jesus' death for our salvation depends on it!

WHY, you may ask, **did God CHOSE to do this?** In the little parable with which I began, the head of the manufacturing firm sent his son, because the machine was not working. And no one else could put it right. So, we need to ask instead, **'What has gone wrong with mankind, that only God can put right?'** And the answer to that is, you know, our rebellion against God, which the Bible calls 'sin'. When Jesus came into this world, the world of mankind did not recognise him for WHO he was, even the people of Israel, by and large, whom he counted as his own, having rescued them from slavery, and taught them through many prophets to expect his arrival. Their leaders, and many of the people, did not believe Jesus' words, rejected his claims and refused to welcome him. They only wanted to get rid of him – which in the end they did, by killing him!

As John says (3:19): "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light, because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." Most of us, you will have to agree, **thought little about sin and God's hatred of it**, before we became Christians. (God hates sin because it ruins the lives of men and women.) **We didn't think it very serious, and often we still don't!** We don't think it merits our eternal loss, suffering a torment of eternal regret and loss. But the fact is that **only GOD could put us right in his sight**, by coming to us in Jesus, to suffer our rejection, our murderous hatred and the agony of his death on the cross. **THAT tells us how great our sin is**, and how great our peril is! Jesus died in our place the death that our sin deserves, so that we need not suffer it.

God could have given up on us; so **WHY should he CARE about us rebels?** The answer is "God so LOVED the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

The whole story of the Bible and the Gospel is that God LOVES us and wants us to know and love him in response, and be with him to all eternity! And the tragedy is that **we fear his love!** We are rather like the birds who come to our kitchen window-sill for the seeds and crumbs WE put out. Even a robin comes when we are close – but if we move, he flies away! He can't believe we care about him!

And the terrible thing is that not only do we want to have nothing to do with God – **we have no power to change ourselves**. All the new year resolutions in the world cannot change us deep within. Even if we do not want to remain lost, even if we want to be like those who love God and who love and care for others – we find **we cannot change our selfishness**, our self-centred way of living that leads to broken relationships, broken homes and – on the scale of nations – to wars.

Only GOD can mend us, we can't mend ourselves. We must confess to God that we are at fault, that we have gone our own way, not God's way – and **we must want to change, and go His way**. When we ask for God's forgiveness, through the death of Jesus – only then will we find God has begun to change us, by giving us new birth by his Spirit.

If I realise that God loves me, and wants to give me eternal life and make me his child – what must I do? John says we are to "receive (welcome) him – believe in his name." Two things must be said about this. **(1) Names** don't mean much to us who are Europeans. For us it's a label to distinguish one person from another. But in days gone by it meant much more, as it does in many other places today. Jesus's Name describes his character, it refers to all He is. **(2) To believe** means much more than head-belief, that a thing is true. It means committing myself totally to Jesus, trusting Him with my whole being.

So, **my response to Jesus' love for me**, must be to fall on my knees and cry out to the Lord like the tax-collector in Jesus' story, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." More completely, I must ask Jesus to come into my life as my Saviour and as my Lord, to love and obey him with all my heart.

I'm going to ask now that all of us bow our heads and be silent before him. This will give you the opportunity to do what I have just described.

Perhaps it will help you if I pray such a prayer, that you can echo it in your hearts – and God will hear you!

*God, I thank you that you sent your only Son, to show me your great love for me, by dying on that cross the death my sins deserve.
Please forgive me, a sinner, for all I have done wrong.
Please make me your child and send your Spirit into my heart to change me and help me become more like Jesus, day by day.
For His dear sake, Amen.*

If you have just done that, truthfully and earnestly, for the very first time, I would like you to come up to me after this service and tell me. It will help you to be definite, and sure of what you have done. And it will help me to pray for you, and perhaps to help you to begin a real walk with Jesus from this day forwards.