

# ***Hungry For God***

**Isaiah 55:1-13  
Matthew 11:25-30  
Colossians 1:24-29**

PREPARED BY  
KEN GEHRELS  
PASTOR  
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA  
ONTARIO, CANADA

A man was standing over his baby's crib, intently staring.

His wife happened by the door, and saw him. She stood there and watched in silence. She saw in her husband's face a wide range of emotions:

wonder....

doubt....

admiration....

It touched her deeply to see him look down like that, into that crib.

Quietly she went in, put her arm around him and, eyes glistening she asked with a trembling voice, "*a penny for your thoughts.*"

Without hesitation he blurted out, "For the life of me, I can't see it... I just can't see it..."

"Can't see what, dear?"

"I can't see how anybody can make a crib like that for \$89.95."

I'm not sure how many nights he ended up sleeping on the couch after that, but I know for sure that he missed the mark!

So caught up with the crib, that he didn't see the wonder and the miracle of the new life laying inside that crib.

I want to suggest to you that there are a lot of religious people around who, during this Christmas season, will find themselves in the same boat as that dad -

"all agog over the manger, and amiss to the baby in the manger."

[Leonard Sweet, p. 199]

They'll take in the trappings and festivities of the season, without giving too much thought to the person who is at the centre of the season.

They may even take part in religious rituals and perhaps even entertain conversation about certain belief statements regarding the person of Jesus, but they won't really see him.

And they won't engage that person.

They won't connect with him.

At the heart of the Christmas story is the birth of a baby, a baby laying in a manger.

And if you can only see 3 dimensions of reality, and only imagine the experience of one dimension in time, then you will eventually end up seeing the birth of that baby as symbol of the birth of new hope for peace and love and joy in the world.

But no more.

You'll end up with a Christmas celebration that sees the wise men giving gifts as a paradigm for humanity to share gifts with each other; and the account of the shepherds as a framework that allows little people to be noticed and valued.

I want to suggest to you that we not get stuck with just the outer trappings of the season. Look deep into the eyes of the baby in the manger.

And you will see there a mystery.

One that cannot be properly contained by the experience of reality as we know it, the limited 5 sense, 3 dimensional experience of reality.

Christmas, authentically experienced, blows that right out of the water.

Christmas, you see, is about God and heavenly reality entering 3-d earthly reality.

It is about other-worldly entering this-world.

It is the mystery of divinity dwelling in humanity.

As Colossians 1 puts it, it is the mystery of

*"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

Friends there is more to reality,  
WAY MORE  
than what we can see or measure or experience.  
WAY MORE!

Don't limit yourself to the three dimensions your eyes can see and your hands can touch.  
Don't be boxed in only by the sounds your ears can hear.  
Be open to more.

There was a time that scientists spoke only of three dimensions of reality, 4 if you include time;  
that there was the x, y, and z axis - and they framed concrete reality.

Today that's all changed.  
Google "*string theory*" and you'll see discussion papers around the possibility of 10 or more  
dimensions to reality.  
There's more going on that the stuff in front of our face.  
Are you open to that possibility?

I want to suggest that however many dimensions there are that part of that dimensionality includes  
the spirit world and the reality of heaven.

I want to suggest to you that heaven is far closer than we think.

And I want to suggest to you that heaven's reality pulses through the barriers around our 3-d  
experience and enters it.

There are, as it were, "leaks" in the barriers that the x/y/z axis have erected around our so-  
called reality. And other realities are seeping into our experiences.

And I tell you this morning that this is the central message of the Bible.

That God enters our reality in the person of Jesus.

He enters right into our lives - touching our real existence with the reality of heaven.

God's reality connects with human reality.

And that connection is centered in Jesus.

***Christ in you, the hope of glory.*** (Colossians 1:27)

Not just that there is some sort of power floating around.

But that there is a living, personal, powerful Spirit-being that we call God, who is very, very close by -  
and who wants a very close relationship with you;  
to actually reach into your being and connect with you.

Christ ***IN*** you....

Over the next weeks, I invite you to be open to that reality, and to look for that reality - for the reality  
of God alive in your living, God present where you are present, God active - even when you are  
resting, God speaking - in a way that you can hear him.

Be open to that reality.

Be open to the reality that a very powerful, and very alive Spirit-being wishes to be with you in  
intimate relationship, in lasting friendship, in eternity-bound conversation and experience.

Can you be open to that?

For that is the message of Christmas. It is the message of God reaching to earth, beckoning to humanity, and calling them to Himself, calling them into real relationship, into participation in his reality.

Can you be open to that; looking beyond the 3 dimensions of reality that is our common experience - and expect to be impacted by Jesus?

Can you be open to that?

I can't fully explain it to you.

And, actually, neither can the Bible.

But it presents it -

It presents the invitation of God into a personal relationship.

We read that invitation today from both the Old and the New Testaments – The invitation from the lips of Jesus himself, and from heaven through the writing of the prophet Isaiah, the invitation is to share in life **with God**.

“Come to me” says Jesus.

“Give ear and come to me;  
hear me, that your soul may live.  
I will make an everlasting covenant with you...  
...Seek the Lord while he may be found;  
call on him while he is near....”

[Is 55]

While He is near....

Friends, **far nearer** than you may be led to believe!

The Bible presents it - but doesn't fully explain it.

Which is what Colossians 1 as much as says -

How it all works, exactly, is a mystery.

Mystery.

Mystery.

Mystery.

The universe is far more full of it than proud, confident modern humanity would have us believe!

The quicker we can admit that there's more to reality than what we can pick up with our limited senses, and grasp and reason with our finite minds -  
- the quicker we can admit that, the better.

For it is only then, when we are willing to admit to more, only then are we even remotely able to hear the message of Colossians 1 -

that there is a mystery which God has allowed to leak into our earthly experience, a mystery that for ages and generations was not understood, but now has been revealed – the mystery of Christ in you.

The mysterious truth that the living Son of God can connect with your inner being, with your soul.

And more than just a handshake or a hug.

The mysterious truth that he can, and will, be

a constant presence,  
a formative power,  
lingering in a loving way deep down inside you.

Not - You living here.

And Christ way away,  
somewhere,  
wherever heaven is,  
over there  
distant from you  
watching from far away.

And you, in the distance, trying to figure out something, anything, a bit at least, about that Christ – and then perhaps factoring in some of that “figurin’” in the rhythm of your life.

**That’s NOT how it works.**

The mysterious **reality**, the **truth** is that the Son of God comes right **INTO** us.

The great invitation of the Bible,

Old testament and New  
is for us to be participants in a dynamic, living relationship with God.

We are invited to share in an intimate, life-long experience of God dwelling with us and **IN** us.

The key thing about being a Christian is not seeking to understand stuff **about** God near so much as it is to

**encounter God and be a home for God.**

The invitation from the lips of Jesus himself, and from heaven through the writing of the prophet Isaiah, is to share in life **with God.**

I invite you in this pre-Christmas season, this Advent season, to

look for the moments,  
seek the experience,  
pray for the Presence,  
listen for the guidance of God

that leaks through the cracks of our 3-d existence, bringing the concrete reality of heaven into our very limited lives.

Including the wonder of Holy Communion.

If it were only a 3-d ritual of remembrance it would be so limited.

But it is far more.

Jesus himself is the one who hinted at that when he instituted the meal, shaping it out of the form of the Passover meal.

Ripping the bread, he said “This is my body.”

Filling the cup, he said, “This is my blood.”

St. Paul picks that up in 1 Corinthians 10 when he says, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?”

(v.16)

How, we’re not exactly told.

But somehow, when people gather prayerfully, in faith, and share this simple event, Power and Presence leaks across from heaven into our dimension of reality in a palpable way and Christ is present.

I'm going to invite you to participate with me in that reality in a few minutes.  
And as you participate, to pray for God's power and presence to seep a little deeper into you, to leak a little further through the barriers of our 3-d limitations.  
to personally connect with you.

There is an ancient fable in which a hunter asks a woodcutter if he has seen any lion tracks in the area. "As a matter of fact," the woodcutter says, "I can lead you right to the lion himself." The hunter, surprised at the possibility, demures. "It's... it's the tracks I'm looking for," he stammers, "not the lion."

[in Sweet, p.191]

I want to invite you beyond the Christmas rituals and songs and words -  
- the tracks -  
to an experience with the person at the heart of Christmas  
the Lion.  
Jesus.

Or, to use another picture that echos Isaiah 55,  
why settle for looking at the menu,  
when you can eat the meal?