



JANUARY 2022

THE LAMPLIGHTER YORK FIRST MORAVIAN

THE COMFORT OF CHRISTMAS

When I was growing up I had a good friend Frankie, who was an excellent baseball player. He lived next door to my grandmother, and would practice his fielding by throwing a tennis ball against the side of this garage and pretend to be the Phillies shortstop. I did the same thing with my neighbor, Jim. We would play whiffel ball in the back yard and I would pretend to be Robin Roberts...Do you know that there have always been people who looked at Christmas that way? They think that God "pretended" to become part of the human race at Christmas.

This idea is one of the persistent heresies that the Church has had to deal with over and over again. There were people teaching this in the FIRST century, and they were called "Gnostics". "Gnosis" is the Greek word for knowledge, and they claimed to have a special, secret knowledge that Jesus wasn't really human. Like a first century conspiracy theory. When he walked he didn't leave any footprints. When he hung on the cross, he didn't really die, he only appeared to die, nor did he rise from the dead...

This is the reason Apostle John wrote I JOHN 4:1-2, "Beloved do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits...because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God..."

In 451 A.D. the Council of Chalcedon wrote one of the earliest Christian Creeds, a Creed which insisted that Jesus was "fully God and fully man." The same teaching, that Jesus was not really human is still around today...

How do we know the Gnostics were wrong? How do we know that God wasn't really "pretending" to enter the human race at Christmas? One of the questions I asked every year when teaching the kids in Confirmation classes was, "How do we know that Jesus is really human?" These are some of the things we discovered:

In the FIRST place, Jesus grew up in a family. MARK 6:2-3 lists the names of four brothers of Jesus and states he had at least two sisters. Jesus knew what it was like to live in a family with brothers and sisters!

Didn't they ever fight with him?
Didn't they ever break his toys?
Didn't they ever tease him?

Jesus grew up with at least six brothers and sisters. What could be more human than that?

SECOND, Jesus worked with his hands. We also read in Mark that he was known as the "carpenter". WHY did Jesus have to work with his hands. You may remember that Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph when he was twelve, and we never hear about Joseph again. He is not there when Jesus teaches in his home synagogue. He is not there at the wedding in Cana when Jesus turns water into wine. He is not there when Jesus feeds five thousand. He is not there with Mary as Jesus is put to death on the cross. Where was Joseph? Most Bible scholars think Joseph died while Jesus was a teenager and that is the reason Jesus waited until he was thirty to begin his public ministry. Jesus, being the oldest son, stayed home working in the carpenter shop until his younger brothers and sisters could take care of themselves, and only then was he freed to leave home to preach and teach.

Jesus knows what it is like to lose a parent at a young age. And he knows what it is like to work for a living. What could be more human than working with his hands to put bread on the table for your younger brothers and sisters?

In the THIRD place, Jesus experienced temptation. When we say that, WHAT comes to mind? Isn't it the temptation by the devil in the wilderness. At the end of those forty days of temptation and hunger, the Bible says, "The devil left him for a season," which clearly implies that he was tempted again. We see this also in the Garden of Gethsemane where he asked his father if he couldn't skip the horror of being put to death by crucifixion. A terrible way to die...

Have you ever felt, "No one else has ever been tempted like I'm being tempted?" Jesus knows what it is like to be tempted! What could be more human than that? What difference does that make to us? HEBREWS 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

FOURTH, Jesus was betrayed by one of his closest friends. The Gospel of Matthew discloses the seating arrangements at the Last Supper. Guess who was seated at the right hand of Jesus? The man who dipped his finger in the same dish as Jesus. He was seated in the place of best friendship and honor and his name was Judas.

Have you trusted another person deeply and they bitterly disappointed you? Have you ever been betrayed? Have you been stabbed in the back? Jesus understands what it is like to be betrayed by the one closest to you.

In the FIFTH place, Jesus suffered and died. When we were living in Lebanon, the suffering of Jesus was made real to me when a priest named Fr. Otterbein lectured and showed slides of the Shroud of Turin. I knew Jesus had been whipped on his back, but the man on the Shroud had lacerations not only on his back, but on his chest and legs. He was literally beaten raw over every inch of his body. When I looked at these wounds, I was horrified! Jesus suffered and died. What could be more human?

Over and over again, the gospels insist that Jesus of Nazareth was not just God pretending to be one of us but Jesus was fully human, as human as you and me! Jesus is not God at a distance. Our God is not an absentee God, but a God who comes among us. This is the COMFORT of Christmas! The New Testament book of HEBREWS chapter 2 verse 18, says "In that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted."

If God had wanted to reach elephants, he would have become an elephant,
If God had wanted to reach butterflies, he would have become...
If God had wanted to reach ants, he would have become...

But God wanted to reach people, so God came to earth as a baby. He lived in a family with brothers and sisters. He worked as a carpenter. Jesus knew temptation and doubt. He was betrayed by one of his closest friends. Jesus was beaten raw, he suffered and he died, and he walks with us still. You and I can never say, "God does not know. God doesn't understand. God doesn't care." The name we remember God by at Christmas is IMMANUEL, which means God with us! In Jesus of Nazareth God has come to us and walked in our shoes!!!

Brothers and sisters, this is the comfort of Christmas! Do you know the comfort of Christmas? Can you say AMEN, this is certainly what I believe?

"With awe and deeply bowed,
we praise the incarnate God.
Who took our flesh and blood.

We our thank offerings bring,
and grateful sing,
Praise to our heavenly King!

Rev Steve Nicholas
December 26, 2021

Elders and Trustees News

Unified Board Meeting

The unified board met December 13th via Zoom for a year-end meeting. There was a unanimous vote to give all employees a 5% increase in salary. The meeting with Melissa Johnson was discussed as well as the state of the parsonage. For now, repairs will continue.

Total Income & Offerings from Sundays 12/4/2021 to 12/31/2021:

General	\$6,813.00
Christmas Eve	\$1,273.00
Refurbishing	\$230.00
Parking	\$150.00
Dickson Wedding	\$150.00
GAP Rewards (Moravian Church Northern Province)	\$329.00
TOTAL	\$8,945.00

Did you know...

We have an online giving portal! If you prefer to catch the service via Zoom you can send your offering online! Just go to

- mmfa.info
- click Giving Portal at the top
- Click 'F' and select First Moravian Church - York, PA

If you prefer to mail your offering you can send it direct to:

Wanda Hendricks
3715 Fox Chase Drive
Dover, PA 17315

January Birthdays

- 1 Jeffrey Rishel
- 2 Chelsea Swartz*
Holly Sterner*
- 4 Sally Senft
- 5 Kayla Berkheimer*
- 7 Mary Jones*
- 8 Terry Zeigler
- 10 Stanley Senft
- 16 Aaren Downs
- 17 Elaine Patrick*
- 25 Jasoni Kotek
- 31 Mona Kotchmar*

January Anniversaries

- 1 Rev. David and Nancy Danneberger*



Prayer Concerns

Amy Ardison (Betsy Senft's sister)
Pastor Jeff Coppage
Ann Coppage
Don Eckert
Mary Jones
Kathie Nicholas
Karrie Rishel
Cliff & Elaine Rowell
Ruth & Clair Seiple

For pastoral care until
our new Pastor is received,
please feel free to call any of the
3 elders listed below.

Jeannette Sprenkle 717-225-4304

John Knokey 717-848-9220

Steve Nicholas 717- 755-7412

*Please do not call Steve
on a Monday*

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2022 Watchword

“Happy is the one who trusts in you, O lord of hosts.”

Psalm 84:12