**A God Who Can Sympathize**

Based on [John 1:1-18](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn1.1-18)

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Christmas Day

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Imagine a person who could only see in black and white, but learned everything there is to know about colors. Suddenly, something changes and she is no longer colourblind. Does she know anything more about, say, the colour red than she did before? Does her knowledge and understanding increase? Is she better able to sympathize with others who also see colour?

This is a philosophical thought experiment called “Mary’s room”,…and perhaps it is a bit too contemplative for the simple joy and pleasantness of Christmas morning worship. But the appointed Gospel for Christmas day is contemplative. It tells of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God…and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. We know first off, that this was so that he could take upon himself our sins and put them to death in his body on the cross. But there is another aspect to the incarnation, it is so that God would sympathize with us, and we could sympathize with God.

The Old Testament is full of God’s prophets and psalms questioning His judgments in a way unheard of from the ministers of the New. Moses asks God from the mountaintop “**why does your wrath burn hot against your people?**” Elijah asks why God caused harm to befall a widow who he was staying with. The psalmist asks why God constantly lets his enemies prevail. And many other such examples of faithful men questioning God’s sympathy and imploring him for help.

We would go too far to say that--in former times--God was *unable* to sympathize with the plight of his people. God, of course, able to do anything. But apparently there was that feeling under the Old Covenant, and it seems odd that God doesn’t rebuke his saints for it.

And you can see the problem, can’t you. Can the colorblind person--who knows everything about the color red—sympathize with one who can see it? I don’t know for sure, but regarless it would make it difficult to trust him to, say…safely drive me through a street light.

So too, there is a sort of “otherness” to God that was palpable even to faithful people of old. *Sure He created us, but he’s not like us.* He is creator, we are creatures. He even said to us, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” So how can we trust God to be understanding and merciful with us, God Almighty who has never felt the problems of the flesh, never been tempted as we are tempted, humbled as we are humbled.

All that has changed with the incarnation of God’s son. As Scripture says, **14**Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16**Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

God in Jesus has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. How could he be tempted without sin? Well, Adam and Eve were tempted without sin. They gave in to temptation, and the rest is history. Jesus was tempted without sin as well, in the flesh, but he overcame temptation. “To err is human”, once quipped a famous poet. It sounds profound but, it’s just not true. Jesus is human and he never erred. And though we once were held captive to sin in our bodies, He has now set us free by giving us His Spirit, so that we are dead to sin and alive in him.

An illustration: a chair is a chair. But, if you take the back off of a chair, you no longer have a chair, do you? You have…a stool. But if you scrape the paint off of the chair, or paint it another color, there is a change applied to the chair, but it’s still a chair...you still call it a chair and use it for a chair. So too, sin can be added to or scrapped off of man and you still have a man. So you have Jesus who was born without that defect of sin, but still like us in every essential way, even in the sympathetic sense of temptation, suffering, even death.

On the Last day, God will come to Judge the living and the dead. Thank God that prior to that happening; he came in mercy and grace to take upon himself our frail flesh. He dwelt among us, in our world of sin and temptation, teaching many things about the love of God, the love for neighbors, even to love our enemies. He once taught saying, “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” You’ve heard the saying, “Don’t Judge me until you walk a mile in my shoes”. God went the extra mile for us, in our shoes, in our flesh, and upon Him was laid the chastisement of us all.

And we can now see and know God, through His incarnate Son.

If you have seen me you have seen the Father. (John 14:9)

In him the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell. (Colossians 3:9)

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)