

## Christmas Day 2022

I haven't preached at a Christmas Day service for years, because we only hold Christmas Day services here at St. David's when Christmas falls on a Sunday. This is the first time I've ever preached at a Christmas Day service where pajamas were invited. I love the pajama angle and am sorry that it has taken so many Christmases as an ordained minister before I tried it.

Being in pajamas together illuminates the enormity of the ordinariness of what God has done for us in Jesus.

In previous Christmas sermons I know I have said that God humbled himself when becoming Jesus, but somehow that does not capture the full picture. Because we forget that humble is beautiful. O Come All Ye Faithful is probably my favorite Christmas hymn, but the verse "Lo he abhors not the virgin's womb" bothers me, because a womb is never abhorrent. Wombs are beautiful. Ordinary, and beautiful. God became one of us and it was beautiful and something to be celebrated.

Many of us usually dress up for church because church is important. I remember going to church on Christmas morning as a child, even though my parents later told me that we never went to church on Christmas Day, only Christmas Eve. Memory is a funny thing, and while it may not be true, I do remember church on Christmas Day. For me, church on Christmas Eve was magical, because I got to hold a candle and feel the hot wax drip on my fingers. Somehow this was allowed, even though at no other time would I be allowed so close to fire. I remember the dark church and the candle and that hot wax, and that was an essential part of Christmas for me.

Christmas morning was different. We would open gifts and of course I loved that part, but then, at least in my memory, we would go to church, where it was no longer dark and we weren't given candles; and after church we went to my paternal grandparents' home, where everyone was older than I and I didn't like the food. I would be dressed up usually in some sort of red dress and have to hug a bunch of people and it would be at least an hour or so before we were allowed to go home and I could play with my new toys, and I was not allowed to ask how soon before we could leave. I remember this vividly even though the church part at least apparently never happened.

Delaying gratification and being kind to my elders were great values to learn, but what troubles me is remembering that while I loved church on Christmas Eve, I did not on Christmas morning. I loved early Christmas morning with stockings and presents, but then felt I had to slog through the later morning and early afternoon before I got to enjoy myself.

I love the idea, instead of dressing up, of going to church in pajamas. Of meeting God where I was. Of feeling like God's house was my house too instead of a place where I felt uncomfortable and nervous because I might do something wrong.

When children act comfortable at St. David's, I feel affirmed in my ministry. I believe that this is what God wants. What Jesus wants. And if wearing PJs adds to that, then I am going to wear pajamas.

Emmanuel, God with us, is a beautiful statement of God identifying with us so much that God chose to take part in the messy, beautiful, painful process of actual human birth. And life. And death. And then destroyed death with the resurrection.

This morning, though, we're not at the death and resurrection part. We're just remembering a young family on Christmas morning, as we gather here on a Christmas morning thousands of years later, a few of us in pajamas, because pajamas are beautiful. People are beautiful. Life may be messy and complicated and painful and controversial, with a generous dose of foolishness, but Baby Jesus shows us how beautiful it all is.