

An Encouraging Word From Dr. Tim Watson

Series- The Characters of Christmas #6

“The God Who Walks In Your Shoes”

Have you ever thought about the angle of the earth in relation to the sun? We might assume the earth sits straight up and down, or that the earth is parallel to the sun, but it is not. The earth is not sitting perpendicular. It is actually tilted. Our earth is tilted at about a 23-degree angle. Perhaps you have noticed globes in libraries and how they sit at an angle. This is very important. With the earth tilted at a 23-degree angle, it makes possible for life to exist as we know it on this planet.

If the earth were straight up and down, it would be difficult for human life to exist. The way the earth is tilted affects the amount of heat absorbed by the earth. While tilted at about a 23-degree angle, our world is rotating on its axis at the rate of about 1,000 miles per hour. This rate of 1,000 miles per hour is just about right for us to exist. If the earth turned at only 100 miles per hour instead of 1,000 miles per hour, our days and nights would be 10 times as long.

What do you think would happen to us and all living creatures on June, July, and August days if those days were 10 times longer than they are now? The heat would be so intense it would wither, wilt, scorch, and kill everything above the surface of the ground.

Whatever survived the incredibly hot days would soon freeze in the 10-times-as-long nights when the earth radiates its heat into the atmosphere.

The point I'm making is this: The God that we worship, the God that holds the universe in the palm of his hand, is such a powerful God, he has the earth rotating at just the right speed so as to balance the right amount of heating and cooling we need to exist. Our earth is tilted at just the right angle, and it is turning at the exact right speed. What a mighty, incredible, powerful God we serve.

Think about it. This God who holds the universe in the palm of his hand wanted to have a personal relationship with us. So what he did was leave the glory of heaven, come into this world in the form of a baby, grow up to be a man who would experience all the limitations of a human being, and then allow himself to be nailed to a cross for our sins. It may be easy for us to accept the fact God could make the earth rotate on its axis at just the right speed.

But can we also accept the fact that this great God, the Creator of the universe, came down from heaven, experienced all the trials we experience, and he walked in our shoes? One of the greatest acts of power and love was God becoming a man and walking where we walk, struggling with the things in which we struggle, identifying with those things that cause difficulty and doubt for us. Is it a reality in your soul that the God who holds this universe in the palm of his hand is interested in the minute details of your life, that he is a God who walks in your shoes?

Look in your Bible to the Gospel of John Chapter One Verses 1 and 2, and John Chapter One Verse 14. This Christmas season, we need to realize that our God identifies with us. Our God identifies with the human condition because he came to this earth and lived as a man. And the things that are heavy on your heart are things that are heavy on our Heavenly Father's heart. He identifies with us. He is a God who walks in our shoes.

Christianity is unique from all other world religions because none of the other religions have a leader who said he was God and that God took the form of a man. Most world religions have a leader who professed to be a teacher or a spokesman for God, but they did not profess to be God. They certainly did not argue that their God was manifest in human form. But Jesus Christ, the son of God, left heaven, came to this earth in the form of a man, and maintained both his divine nature as fully God and fully human, fully God and fully man all at the same time.

Let's read our text in John Chapter One Verses 1 and 2, and then we'll skip down to Verse 14. "In the beginning was the Word."... and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He, meaning Jesus, was with God in the beginning." Verse 14 of John chapter one: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and full of truth."

The God who walks in your shoes. Let's take some time to explain our text this morning.

- I. **The Explanation of the Text.** In John chapter one, verse one, the writer says, "In the beginning was the Word." John 1:1 recalls the opening words of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The expression "in the beginning" does not refer to a particular moment in time, but it refers to timeless eternity.

God does not measure time in 24-hour sequences, blocks of time in days, weeks, months, and years. Timeless eternity means God has always existed and will always exist, which is too much for the human mind to comprehend. "In the beginning was the Word." Word, it is the Greek word logos. This term, the Word or logos, refers to Jesus Christ, for he is the one who became flesh and dwelt among men. When John says Christ is the logos, the Word, he is saying that words are expressions of thoughts and ideas.

Words are revelations of one mind to another mind. Christ is the Word. He is the revelation to men and women of the thoughts and ideas of God Himself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." In theological terms, this verse refers to the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. What that means is that Christ, the Word, has always been with God and will always be with God. When John says Christ, the Word, was with God in the beginning, it points to his continuous existence.

Jesus, the son of God, did not come into existence on Christmas morning, December the 25th of year one. He has been in existence with his Father from the very beginning. When the heavens were formed, Christ was there. When the Earth was made, Christ was there. When Adam and Eve were created, Christ was there. When Noah's Ark set sail, Christ was there. When Israel was born as a nation in the book of Genesis, Christ was there.

Christ is an equal form and expression of God the Father, and has had continuous existence with the Father from the very beginning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." That is, Christ was there with God the Father from the very beginning, and the Word was God. Here we see one of the fundamental truths of historic biblical Christianity. Christ was not only with God, but he is God.

And the Word, the Bible says, "logos", Christ was God. There are some religious groups who deny Christ's deity. They say Christ was not God, he was a good man, he was a moral teacher. But the Bible is very clear here in John chapter one, verse one. The Word, logos, Christ, was God. In John chapter 10, verse 30, Jesus said of himself, "I and the Father are one." In John chapter 14, verse nine, Jesus said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." John is saying Christ was God in the beginning, and he continues to be God today.

And when he came to this Earth, taking on the form of a man, he was fully human and fully God all at the same time. Fully God, fully man, his divinity, his humanity were one and the same. This may be hard for us to wrap our brains around, but let's try it with a very simple illustration.

If you were to take a can of red paint and a can of blue paint and then pour one into the other and then mix them together where it's impossible to see where the red ends and the blue begins, the color purple is the result.

Purple is the perfect blending of the red and the blue. This is the way it is with Jesus. His deity and his humanity were perfect and balanced. You could not tell where his deity ended and his humanity began because Christ was fully God and fully man at the same time. We can accept Christ's divinity, that he was fully God. We can accept his power in creation. But can we accept his humanity? In John 1:14, this is what we call the incarnation of Christ, God becoming man in the flesh.

The Bible says in verse 14 of John 1, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and full of truth." The New International Version says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The Living Bible says, "Christ became a human being and lived here on earth among us." The Message, which is a paraphrase, says, "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." It is easy for many of us to accept the deity of Christ.

He is God. Many of us do not have a problem with this. We may believe that he's able to rotate the earth on its axis at a 23-degree angle and at a perfect speed of a thousand miles per hour. But do we also believe that this God who became a man loves us so much he identifies, empathizes, and sympathizes with the struggles and the baggage that we deal with every day? Do we believe this God, who became a man, can understand what we experience daily because he walked in our shoes?

To me, this is the theme of Christmas, that the God of the universe would lay aside the privileges of heaven, come to this sin-infested world, walk in our shoes, and go to the cross for people like us that were born 2,000 years later.

The Bible tells us in Philippians 2:5-8, Paul says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form of God, Jesus did not regard equality with God a

thing to be grasped. But Jesus emptied himself." That is, he laid aside his privileges.

"Taking the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Is it a reality that the God who holds the universe in the palm of his hand walks in your shoes and identifies with your situation today? What does this mean for us today? We've done some explanation of the text.

II. **Application of the Text**- First of all, Jesus identifies with your physical limitations. When Christ came to this earth, even though he was divine, he experienced what it was to live as a human being. When he became a man, he experienced all the limitations and physical shortcomings that we experience. While Christ was in heaven, he was omnipresent. That means, like his Heavenly Father, he could be in all places, all the time.

But when he became a man, Christ took on the limitations of a man. From a physical standpoint, he was no longer omnipresent. He could only be in one place at one time.

a. **Because Jesus was a man, he knew what it was to become tired.** In John 4:6, Jesus is interacting with the Samaritan woman at the well. And John 4:6 says, "Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, he sat down by the well."

b. **Because Jesus was a man, he knew what it was to become hungry.**

Matthew 4:2, Jesus is in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights being tempted by Satan. And the Bible tells us in Matthew 4:2, "After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was hungry."

c. **Because Jesus was a man, he knew what it was to become thirsty.** In John 19:28, as Jesus is nailed to the cross, John 19:28 says, "Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.'" Jesus Christ, the God of the universe, the one who became a man, identifies with your physical struggles.

You may come today physically tired, physically worn out because of the circumstances, the situations, the stage of life in which you find yourself. I'm thinking today of a young mother who feels physically overwhelmed by the daily responsibilities of working outside the home.... and maybe coming home to more responsibilities of parenting and cooking and managing the household. I'm thinking today of a father who, in today's economic times, is working two jobs to make ends meet, or he's working overtime to provide for his family.

I'm thinking today of the man or woman who is spending day after day caring for a sick loved one who is in the hospital, in a care facility, or someone who is homebound. I see people in these situations as caregivers, who are extremely tired. The hope of the Gospel, the word from the Lord today is this, you have a God who walks in your shoes. You have a God who identifies with your situation. When you feel as if you can't go on anymore, you have a Savior who identifies with your physical limitations and he will be there to restore your strength.

Isaiah 40:29-31 says it like this, "God gives strength to the weary. To him who lacks might, God increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary." **Jesus identifies with your physical limitations.**

Is it a reality today that the God who holds the universe in the palm of his hand walks in your shoes and identifies with you? Not only does Jesus identify with your physical limitations, but:

II. **Jesus identifies with your emotional diversity.** Think about the wide range of emotions that you and I possess: anger, disappointment, happiness, grief, excitement, worry, frustration, just to name a few. Because God has created us and wired us as human beings with a wide range of emotions, there are times when we find ourselves struggling with these feelings and emotions.

The good news of the Gospel is because Jesus became a man, because he walked in your shoes and mine, he's able to identify with your range of emotions.

a. **Jesus knew what it was to laugh.** Even though there is no direct reference to Jesus laughing in the New Testament, I am sure he laughed. Jesus said in John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and your joy may be made full." It's hard to believe Jesus could talk about joy and not laugh.

In John 2:2, at the wedding in Cana, the Bible says, "And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the wedding." I believe Jesus was invited to that wedding because he was enjoyable to be around. He was a very pleasurable and inviting person to be around that had a good sense of humor. Jesus knew what it was to laugh, but:

b. **Jesus knew what it was to be angry.** In Matthew 21:12-13, we have the money changers in the temple, in the temple where he turned the tables upside down when he saw the money changers abusing the temple and using it in an unholy way.

In Mark 10:14, Jesus knew what it was to be angry because he was angry when the disciples tried to turn away the little children.

c. **Jesus knew what it was to experience pressure and anxiety in his life.** In Luke 22:44, this is in the Garden of Gethsemane right before Judas betrayed him, right before he surrendered himself to go to the cross, Luke 22:44 says, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." Jesus experienced anxiety, pressure and inner conflict like never before.

Jesus had emotions. Jesus knew what it was to grieve. John 11:35, the shortest verse in the Bible, says that when Jesus went to the tomb of his good friend Lazarus, he wept. And the verb that John uses for wept in the language of the New Testament implies Jesus literally burst into tears. It means to wail, to cry out loudly. Because Jesus was a man, he's able to identify with your diversity, your wide range of emotions.

When you grieve this holiday season because your loved one is no longer with you, you may wonder, "Does anyone know how I feel? Does anyone care how I feel?" Christ identifies with your grief. When wrong seems to be winning over right and you're angry, angry for the right reason, you may say, "No one knows what I'm feeling." Christ identifies with your anger. When you feel the stress and pressures of life are about to overtake you and you're overwhelmed you may say, "No one can identify with the pressure that I'm under." Christ identifies with your wide range of emotions.

He knew what it was like to be under pressure. So whatever hurts you bring, Christ identifies with you.

Is it a reality to you that the God who holds the universe in the palm of his hand walks in your shoes and identifies with your situation? Not only does Jesus identify with you physically and emotionally, but:

III. **Jesus identifies with your spiritual challenges.** Because Jesus came to this earth and lived as a man, he is able to identify with your spiritual challenges.

Even though you may be a follower of Jesus Christ, every day that you're alive on this earth, you will continue to face spiritual struggles. The Bible tells us in Romans 7 that there is a constant spiritual battle taking place within us. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 7, "It is the flesh versus the spirit, it is the good versus the bad." And as long as that battle is raging inside of us, we will face temptation to sin, the temptation to do that which is displeasing to God.

But you can be encouraged today because the God of the universe has walked in your shoes and he can give you victory over your spiritual challenges. Jesus knew what it was to be tempted by Satan. He was in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, according to Matthew 4, tempted by the evil one. Jesus knew what it was to struggle with doing his will versus the will of God the Father. In Matthew 26:39, the Bible says, right before he went to the cross, Jesus prayed, "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and he prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will. Not my will be done, but your will be done.'" Here's the most powerful verse when it comes to dealing with our spiritual challenges.

Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest," (Jesus) who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin." What spiritual challenges are real in your life today? Are you unconcerned about others? Are you not growing in your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? What areas of your life are you facing temptation?

Are you battling an addiction? Maybe you're constantly saying things about other people that you should not say. Maybe you've got bitterness and unforgiveness in your heart toward another person. Maybe you have problems with your temper. God's word to you is this: "Place your spiritual challenge in my hand." Our God says, "Let me help you. I too was tempted, but I can give you strength and

power you've never experienced." Aren't you thankful that we serve a God that identifies with us physically, emotionally, and spiritually?

Aren't you glad that we can have a daily, personal relationship with a God who has chosen to come from heaven and walk in our shoes?

It was Thursday, November the 27th, 2003, over 20 years ago, that with extraordinary secrecy, the president at the time, President George W. Bush paid a surprise visit to Iraq during the Thanksgiving holidays. His purpose in going to Iraq was to thank the United States troops for defending the American people from danger.

And while there in Iraq, the president served up Thanksgiving dinner to 600 stunned soldiers in a mess hall at Baghdad's airport. The soldiers had gathered for what they thought would be a speech by Chief US Administrator Paul Bremer. Bremer told the troops he would read a Thanksgiving proclamation from the president. He paused and noted that it was customary for the most senior official present to read the president's proclamation.

He asked the question, "Is there anyone back there who's more senior?" At that point, the president himself, George W. Bush emerged from behind a curtain as cheering soldiers climbed on chairs and tables to yell their approval. With regard to this Thanksgiving visit to the soldiers far from home, President Bush said, "It's got to be lonely for them. I thought it was important to send the message that we care for them." The unannounced visit not only brought wild cheers from the battle-worn soldiers, but it also stunned the nation and even surprised the president's parents who had been expecting him at the Thanksgiving table at his ranch in Crawford, Texas.

God could have chosen to communicate his love to mankind in a number of ways. He could have sent an angel to tell us, "God loves you." He could have sent a text message, he could have sent an email, he could have called on a cell phone and said, "I love you."

But 2,000 years ago, he made a surprise visit to a sinful world that would eventually nail him to a cross. And aren't you thankful that God showed his love for us by coming in person in the form of his son Jesus Christ?

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with the God in the beginning. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. John 1:1-2;14