CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT THE PRESENCE

Ask Siri to read Matthew 1:23

For my young children the excitement of Christmas really is about the presents. We can harp on about Jesus being the best gift but honestly it's just background noise to the paper tearing, box opening frenzy. Presents can be held, presents can be seen, presents can make obnoxiously loud noises in your sister's face until she screams. But what if my materialistic little darlings didn't have us there on Christmas morning? What if they woke up to all the presents they've ever dreamed of but no parents to be found? No doubt they would have a fantastic few hours unwrapping to their hearts' content. However, I believe eventually our absence would cause some concern.

If they were to play a twisted real life game of "would you rather?" and be given the choice of having every present they ever wanted for the rest of their lives but no parents *or* parents but never receiving a gift again, if they really truly had to make this choice I believe they (yes even the teenagers) would choose to have their parents. They enjoy the presents because they can take our presence for granted.

One of the names Jesus is given in the Bible is Immanuel (or Emmanuel depending on your Bible). This name means **"God with us."**

Mt 1:23 **'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'** (which means 'God with us').

When Jesus was born, as a tiny male human, he wasn't just another gorgeous little person coming into the world, he was God coming into the world. God becoming flesh and bone - hungry and thirsty, tired, weak, subject to the weather, politics, gossip and prejudice.

That's why Christmas, contrary to some young people, is not about presents but the presence - the presence of God in the world. Christmas is the story of God, although he has always been providentially present, becoming present in humanity in a unique and intimate way.

Why? Why did God enter bodily into the mess and dirt and exhaustion of humanness? Another Bible verse puts it clearly

"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity… he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." Hebrews 2:14, 17

God became human to save humans! To pay the price for our sins so that we could enjoy His presence forever. And that presence is, and always will be, better than any presents.

Prayer
Dear God, May my heart rejoice this Christmas that you, creator of heaven and earth, became human to save me from death and sin. May this coming new year bring me an ever increasing awareness of your loving presence in my life and a desire to live for you. Amen.

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