

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera, QLD

Christmas Day 2023

**Luke 2:1-7**

**GOD CAME DOWN**

Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was the first person to travel into space, completing an orbit of the earth on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1961. With any famous event there are often a number of different accounts about what was said by the people involved, but one version is that in looking at the earth and space in a way that no human being had ever done before, Gagarin said, 'I see no God up here'. There is also speculation on whether Gagarin was a Christian at this time, something unacceptable for someone of his position in the Soviet Union, or if he became one later because of his experience – I have no idea. God is indeed in space, in the world, in the beauty of His creation. But if Gagarin, and countless other people, really want to see, encounter, know God, maybe we all need to be looking a bit lower.

God came down. As happened a number of times in the Bible, to really find where and who God is, is to not look where we expect to find Him. To truly know God's nature, God's character, God's love for us, is to look at the tiny baby whose birth we celebrate this day. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and that's interesting, because with all the pictures, and carols, etc we have about the birth of Jesus we have millions and millions of words about what this birth was like, or, perhaps, what we think it was like. But in the Bible itself this event, as important as it is, is only 577 words in total, from Luke 2 and Matthew 1. But in what is here, we learn so much about God and about this Saviour who came for us all.

While we might sometimes look for God in the vastness of the universe, the power of the seas, the grandeur of a great forest, the amazing complexity of all the forms of living things in this world, as impressive and important as all these things are, to really know God we need to come to see Him as He has chosen to fully reveal Himself to us. This short but very well-known Christmas reading from Luke might be brief in its details, but it tells us so much about what God is doing here. God has come into our world, in a time, at a place, with real people involved. God came down, the God who does indeed fill the universe, forms all of Creation, that same God in all of His power and might came down in the form of one of most helpless forms of life there is; a tiny human baby. While that might not seem to make sense always to us, and it certainly wasn't how those waiting for this Saviour expected Him to come, God knew that this is what had to be done in order to open the way for all people to come back to Him.

God came down, among His people, as He had promised. From the time of Adam and Eve's first sin God had been promising the send a Saviour to bring people back to Him. From the time of King David, it is promised that this Saviour, who would bring peace on earth, would come from the family of David, who had brought peace to God's people. In his account of this birth Luke reminds us that Jesus is born in the little town of Bethlehem, in royal David's city, and the angel tells the shepherds that this has happened in King David's hometown – this is all important, God has kept His promise.

God came down, to be a part of human history, a part of our lives. Again, in telling us about the rulers of this time we are reminded that this is a real person, born at a specific time, in a particular place. But at the same time He is also God, who always has been there (just to make our brains sore!). He came down to live the life that we live. To go through what we go through; life with it's ups and downs, relationships with their joys

and struggles, the temptations, challenges and sometimes struggles in our relationship with God, the grief over death, the joy in new life. All that we go through Jesus, God Himself, also went through. He didn't grow up and live in a pampered and privileged way; He came to be one of us. In Jesus, God came down, not just physically from heaven, but down to the level of the lives we live, the things we experience, each day.

And God came down, to take on our sin; to live the perfect life that we cannot live, so He could be the ultimate and redeeming sacrifice for us. He came down into our dark and dirty world. Humbly. For all. Jesus came into the world in this way, to be born, to live, to die, to rise, so that we can know there is no place in the world or in our lives that is too dark, too smelly, too lowly, too troubled and difficult, that He does not come to us. It is important that we remember the details here which Luke gives us about the humble birth of the promised Saviour, but it is also important that we take Him out of the manger, that we see Him on the cross dying for our sins, that we know He experienced new life when He came out of the tomb on that Sunday morning, and, ultimately, that He was taken up to heaven so that we too have the new life He earned for us. In Jesus, God came down, but then God lifted Him up in glory.

Amidst the tinsel and decorations, the lights, the lovely colours, the gifts, the food, the being with people we want to be with, we remember that the circumstances of that first Christmas were very different to what most of us experience today. God came down; in a humble way which fulfilled all of God's promises – into our world, into our lives, to be with us and to lift us up to be with Him. In Jesus, God continues to come down to us, wherever we are. If you ever feel you can't see God, stop looking up too high; look to the One who came down to be one of us. In His birth, His life, His death, His rising again, we see all of God's love for us, all that God wants to share with us, whatever we feel or

whatever we are going through in our lives. In the stable, on the cross, in the empty tomb, the heavenly and the miraculous meets the humble and the earthly. God came down, and He did that for us. Amen.

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

- Is there any part of the Christmas story which is especially meaningful or significant for you? Do you know why that is?
- Since they are only short, read through the two accounts of Jesus' birth we have in the Bible: Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-20. Does anything jump out at you that you had not really noticed before? Do you notice any well accepted parts of 'our' Christmas story which aren't in fact in the Bible?
- Think about what it means for us that God came down, into our world, into our lives, in Jesus. What does that say about His relationship with us? What does it say about how He is with us in our lives?
- Are there any parts of your life, either outward or inward, which you feel are dark, lowly, smelly? Any things you struggle with? Give them to the One who was born in a stable for you, and died on the cross for you, praying for His strength and forgiveness as you work through them.

Pray: thank God for the gift of Jesus, that He was born in such a humble and lowly way, and that in Him we see God's love for us all. Ask God to help us accept the Saviour of the world as our Saviour also.

*Pastor Andrew R. Koehler*  
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