

**“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).”**

***Matthew 1:23***

There is perhaps no more disparaging feeling than the feeling of loneliness—the feeling of being alone. I’m not talking about being bored or simply missing those we love; that happens to all of us now and then and can usually be eased by a phone call or a movie. The loneliness I’m referring to is the aching lack of understanding and commitment surrounding us and supporting us.

Our most obvious connection to this kind of “alone-ness” comes when we lose a loved one, lose some of our independence, or when catastrophic illness isolates us from the rest of society. At such times we truly know what it means to be alone—to the point where silence hurts more deeply than any noise ever could. The fact is, when others stand beside us, we can face any hostility or overcome any barrier. But when we are utterly alone, even the smallest hurdle becomes impossible.

For me, the most wonderful message of Jesus’ nativity is that we never need to be alone when we suffer or feel challenged in life, for God, and God’s saints (yes, that means you too!), are with us always. Christmas is the ultimate time of promise and hope because the very Author of Creation came to us so that God might assure us of understanding and acceptance in God’s Kingdom. Jesus, God incarnate, the Word made flesh, came among us so that no shame or lack of ability should ever isolate us from love and commitment. What a wonderful event! What a wonderful light has dawned upon us!

In discouraging times, when we feel little understood or appreciated, or wonder what is going to happen next, we have the assurance that God is with us, because God came to us in Jesus and dwells among us in the Spirit, giving us peace and the reassurance of God’s presence in our loneliness. With that kind of acceptance, with that kind of support, how can we help but be confident in the future? How can we not reach out to each other in courage?

Rejoice! Unto you a child is born! Unto you, God gives a world of life and hope!  
Have a merry Christmas season!

Yours in Christ,  
Kregg