John’s Gospel gives us a different take from the familiar narrative story in Luke. We are all familiar with the story of Mary giving birth to Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem that we typically read on Christmas Eve and portray in Christmas pageants. Luke presents the story from a human/historical standpoint.

But John, writing after the other Gospels and likely having them available to him, adds something that isn’t part of the earlier Gospels. John, often called the spiritual Gospel, provides a heavenly viewpoint, which focuses on Jesus’s incarnation, or the coming of God to dwell among us. The use of the term – the Word of the Lord – was one way in which Jews referred to God, who was too holy to refer to by full name. John tells us that The Word – the Divine Logos which is the essence, creative force of God – has always existed. It existed in the beginning and was the force that created the heavens and the earth. It is and has always been life.

The Word, the divine, holy God who has always existed and who created all things came to also be flesh – human – and to live among us. The word that is translated “live” is a word associated with tent or tabernacle. The tabernacle was carried among the Israelites throughout their exodus from Egypt until the time that they conquered the Canaanites. The tabernacle, very holy, was the portable earthly meeting place of God with His people. John’s use of this same word for what happened when Jesus was born in Bethlehem is a very clear statement. God met human beings where they were by becoming flesh, like them. God did this because He loved us and He knew that the only way to truly reconcile us to Him was through this incarnation.

Soren Kierkegaard was a 19th century Danish philosopher and theologian. He tells a parable that I think explains well what happened that Christmas when The Word became flesh and was born as a child, Jesus. The parable goes something like this:

Suppose there was a king who loved a humble maiden. The king was like no other king. Every statesman trembled before his power. No one dared breathe a word against him, for he had the strength to crush all opponents.

And yet this mighty king was melted by love for a humble maiden who lived in a poor village in his kingdom. How could he declare his love for her?

In an odd sort of way, his kingliness tied his hands. If he brought her to the palace and crowned her head with jewels and clothed her body in royal robes, she would surely not resist-no one dared resist him. But would she love him?

She would say she loved him, of course, but would she truly? Or would she live with him in fear, nursing a private grief for the life she had left behind? Would she be happy at his side? How could he know for sure? If he rode to her forest cottage in his royal carriage, with an armed escort waving bright banners, that too would overwhelm her.

He did not want a cringing subject. He wanted a lover, an equal. He wanted her to forget that he was a king and she a humble maiden and to let shared love cross the gulf between them. The king resolved to descend to her. He would come to her as a peasant. That was the only way to truly win her love. So he abandoned his palace and his riches and his comfort and put on the clothes of a peasant. He went and lived among the peasants. He worked with them, shared their sufferings and danced at their feasts. He approached her cottage with a worn cloak and a new identity – renouncing his throne to declare his love and win hers.

So it is with God -- the God who is so holy that we can barely speak his name -- the God who breathed life into everything – chose to become flesh. He chose to become a little child, dependent upon others for His care

He chose to suffer disappointments and to struggle to earn a living. He chose to suffer great humiliation and pain and to die, so that through his conquering of death, we could also conquer death and live with Him forever.

God did all that because He loved us.

Amen

<http://www.readingtheology.com/the-king-and-the-maiden-by-s%C3%B8ren-kierkegaard>

[www.storiesforpreaching.com](http://www.storiesforpreaching.com)