Benediction: More light than we can learn,
More wealth than we can treasure,
More love than we can earn,
More peace than we can measure,
Because one Child is born.

Amen

Author C.S Lewis, in Mere Christianity said, “The Son of God became man to enable men to become the sons of God.”

The Word, which had been present at creation and, in fact, was a co-creator, became Flesh and made its dwelling with us. For the Greek mind, in the Gospel writer John’s day, the “Word” referred to the rational principle that supervised or governed the universe. To the Jew, “Word” was a reference to God. Thus in using the phrase the Word to refer to Jesus, John equated the “Word” with God while noting that the Word was distinct from the Father.

The Word became Flesh to enable the Light to overcome darkness, to make us children of God and to keep us in right relationship with our Father, no matter what we’ve done. Out of love, the Word became Flesh, leaving behind all the comforts of heaven, to suffer and to know sorrow just as we do, to feel our pain and also to assure that we will have a place with Him eternally, where there is no more sorrow or pain – where there is only Light and no darkness.

A modern-day telling of story, the source of which is unknown, illustrates this concept.

At the end of time, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God’s throne.

Most shrank back from the brilliant light before them. But some groups near the front talked heatedly – not with cringing shame, but with belligerence.

‘Can God judge us? How can he know about suffering?’ snapped a young Albanian. He removes his shirt to reveal a bullet scarred back. ‘ In Kosovo we endured terror… shootings… torture!’

In another group an aged aboriginal woman pulls a crumpled, tear stained photograph from her pocket. ‘What about this?’ she demanded, ‘This is my precious child. I have not seen her since the day she was stolen away for no crime but being black!’

In another crowd, a pregnant schoolgirl with sullen eyes. ‘Why should I suffer’ she murmured, ‘It wasn’t my fault.’

Far out across the plain there were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering he permitted in this world. How lucky God was to live in heaven where all was sweetness and light, where there was no weeping or fear, no hunger or hatred. What did God know of all that people had been forced to endure in this world? For God leads a pretty sheltered life, they said.

So each of these groups sent forth their leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. A Jew, a person from Hiroshima, a horribly deformed arthritic, a thalidomide child. In the center of the plain they consulted with each other. At last they were ready to present their case. It was rather clever.

Before God could be qualified to be their judge, he must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God should be sentenced to live on earth – as a man!

‘Let him be born into a hated race. Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted. Give him a work so difficult that even his family will think him out of his mind when he tries to do it. Let him be betrayed by his closest friends. Let him face false charges, be tried by a prejudiced jury and convicted by a cowardly judge. Let him be tortured.

‘At the last, let him see what it means to be terribly alone. Then let him die. Let him die so that there can be no doubt that he died. Let there be a great host of witnesses to verify it.’

As each leader announced his portion of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the throng of people assembled.

And when the last had finished pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence. No-one uttered another word. No-one moved. For suddenly all knew that God had already served his sentence.

In becoming Flesh, the Word became subject to all the betrayal, pain and death of the secular world. Yet all that was necessary in that through that death, the Word made it possible for us to live eternally and to live in peace with God and our neighbors. In becoming human, God made it possible for humans to become children of God.

Amen