

4pm- "They shall call him Emmanuel" (God is with us).

10pm- "& on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests".

8am- "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."

9:30am- "...& the darkness has not overcome it."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, during WWII, when plane-travel and television were still in their infancy, a young family—father, mother, and children--were in their front yard in Pennsylvania, making a snowman. It was Christmas Day. Suddenly, a plane passed directly overhead. The mother shouted to the children:

"Look! Your uncle is on that plane. Let's all wave to him. Maybe he will see us."

With that, the children jumped up & down, waved frantically, and shouted at the top of their lungs. Seconds later, after the plane had passed, the tiniest child turned to her daddy and asked:

"Daddy, how do people climb up to the sky to get in those planes?"

Her father explained that passengers didn't have to climb to the sky to get into the planes. The planes come down from the sky to the passengers.

That, I say, is what Christmas is all about.

'How so?' you ask.

'Well, I am glad you asked that question!'

You see, the story is a beautiful illustration of what Christmas is all about, because Christmas celebrates the fact that the infinite God, at a particular point in time and at a particular place on earth, crossed an unimaginable border and personally 'came down,' that is, entered our world ...**Emmanuel—God is with Us!** Before such an undreamable dream, the human intellect reels, while the surrendering, faith-filled-soul bows in awe. And so, 2,015 years ago, like a great star bound out of destiny itself, Jesus '**came down**' from heaven and lit up the darkness of our world! **Emmanuel!**

I will now submit, for your consideration, a series of six questions. You don't have to actually answer them—just ponder them a bit. In the end, I think you'll get my point.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman Trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America Pageant.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name this decade's World Series winners.

How did you do? The point is ...few of us, if any, remember the 'headliners' of yesterday. And these are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. Yet, who remembers?

You see, applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades, trophies, and certificates are, one way or another, buried with their owners.

Now here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through difficult times.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated.
5. Think of five people with whom you enjoy spending time.

Easier? Indeed!

The lesson is:

The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or ...the most awards.

They are, simply, the ones who care about you the most. God has loved you even longer than your own mother has, for he knew you and loved you before you were even conceived! He willed you into existence and, to this very nano-second, holds you in existence. Your parents were simply 'instruments' in his divine hands. Most likely, they were surprised to learn you were on your way! And, once they did learn of your impending arrival, they prayed to him that you would be whole.

*God loves his creation so much that he deigned to become human himself and agreed to suffer as much as any human possibly could—just to show us the way home. “**Emmanuel**”...God is with us!*

*In conclusion, appreciate your family and friends, those who have helped you along the path of life, who care the most about you. **BUT**, above all, realize ...no one cares about you as much as... Almighty God himself!*

Merry Christmas, my friends.

Be sure to carry within you and enjoy this wonderful truth...

Emmanuel!

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you ...the Father, the Infant-son, & the Holy Spirit. Amen.