

Brennan Manning: "This is the God of the gospel of grace. A God who, out of love for us, sent the only Son He ever had wrapped in our skin. He learned how to walk, stumbled and fell, cried for His milk, sweated blood in the night, was lashed with a whip and showered with spit, was fixed to a cross, and died whispering forgiveness on us all. "

Philippians 2: 5-8: Let the same mind be in you that was^[a] in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Brennan Manning is sometimes criticized for overemphasizing Jesus' humanity over his divinity, and for promoting what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace." Manning was a defrocked priest who struggled with addiction. He reached out to society's least and lost with a message of forgiveness and redemption through Christ, some say, with too little focus on repentance and reform. I disagree with his critics, and I find his views very thought provoking and relatable.

We know very little about Jesus' childhood and even less about Mary & Joseph's parenting of the young Jesus. Its likely that Jesus went through all the trials and struggles of growing up as any baby did, and Mary experienced all the typical joys and challenges of a mother of a baby. Try to imagine Jesus' first steps, first words, teething pain... Did he experience what any purely human baby did ? When did he come to know his mission as our Savior ? Did Mary ever doubt the message from Gabriel ? Was she always sure He was divine? What did Joseph

know ? Did he ever doubt? (I often wonder why God decided to send Jesus to earth when and where He did.)

We only know about the 12 year old Jesus wandering off as the family walked back from Jerusalem, and how Mary and Joseph were upset about losing him. I recall Pastor Mary's story about Mateo getting lost in the crowd in Italy. Mary and Joseph experienced that same panic that day. Imagine your self- loathing for losing a child God told you was **His** Son!

During the first Holy Week, Jesus' humanity is quite apparent. He sweated blood and prayed for the cup to pass. He became frustrated with his disciples for falling asleep when he needed them to pray and be with him. He cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me ?" I often wonder if the human part of Jesus was at times unsure that his heavenly Father indeed had his back through those terrifying hours. Were the disciples questioning their decision to follow Him ? Their families were likely giving them a dose of "I told you so... You were crazy to give up your job and follow that man to his arrest and execution."

Of course, we know that the greatest story ever told has a happy ending. Living 2000 years later, we can avoid the shock, pain and loss of Jesus death and burial. But its important not to skip past this beautiful sacrifice to get to the alleluias and trumpets too quickly. Let's use the days of Good Friday and Holy Saturday to own our sins that put Jesus on the cross, and to relive Christ's passion. Consider the human Jesus, and the loss of his Mother and his disciples on those dark days. Put yourself there with them. As we say at Holy Communion, "the body of Christ, given for **you**. The blood of Christ, shed for **you**."

Jesus, thank you for enduring humiliation, abuse and death to save an unworthy me. Your humanity teaches me that you understand human suffering, and your divinity has saved me. Amen.

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