

# Cybercolumn by Jeanie Miley: We are invited into the Jesus story

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## CYBER COLUMN: We are invited into the Jesus story

**By Jeanie Miley**

“I just can’t accept that a good God would send his only son to earth to do all the good Jesus did, only to murder him on a cross.”

The stillness in the room contrasted starkly with the force of the angry outburst.

“Oh, no,” I thought. “Here we go again with that same tired argument!”

Jeanie Miley
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Always, when I hear that argument, I wonder if the person who is speaking such words wants to end the discussion or begin a dialogue. Does he or she want to make a pronouncement or invite an exploration of the mysteries of faith? Is there honest seeking in the question, or it is the rhetorical rambling of a person who needs to shock others and call attention to himself?

Is the person begging for reassurance about who God is, or is she trying to impress others with her intellectual superiority?

I'll admit that the crucifixion is pretty hard to accept, especially if that is where you start. It is hard to reconcile the brutality of murdering Jesus on a criminal's cross with the idea of "so great a love as this."

It is, as well, hard to understand the Incarnation, but it is a little easier to start with a Baby. Babies are, for the most part, innocent and cute, and most people are drawn, at least some of the time, to babies. And almost anyone will admit that the picture of a Sweet Jesus, meek and mild, away in his manger has more appeal than the image of a dying man, bleeding on a cross.

Before I get carried away into some romantic sentimentality about babies, however, I am reminded that this Baby was, after all, God Incarnate. The Baby Jesus was God-in-the-Flesh, and it was, according to the Holy Scriptures, a huge humbling for God to take on the form of a baby. For the One who held all of creation in the palm of his hand to confine his powers to the limitations of infancy is a Reality that my finite mind can barely imagine.

It is in both the incarnation, then, and the crucifixion, that we must face the hard fact that there is no transformation without self-denial and suffering. There is no redemption without sacrifice, and there is no salvation without a crucifixion.

There is no easy road to wholeness, and the life of Jesus from his birth to his death is a gripping illustration that we are asked to give up, to detach, to let go and let God do with us what God has in mind to do.

Even God had to give up heaven to become Jesus, and even Jesus had to surrender his earthly form to become the Christ, and so we, too, are asked to give up that which confines and limits and inhibits us in order to take on

the fullness of who we are intended to be.

The Christmas story becomes dynamite, then, in the hearts and minds of all of us when we finally fathom what it really means that God became man and that we are invited to be crucified with him, not because we are bad, but so that we might become whole. We are invited into the Jesus story, not because we need to be punished, but because God has so much to give us if only we can give up our attachments to the things that keep us fragmented, alienated and frustrated.

I stand before the manger again in this darkest time of the year and behold the glorious Mystery of it all, shaking my head in wonderment one more time.

Again, I remember that what my mind cannot understand, my heart embraces.

*Jeanie Miley is an author and columnist and a retreat and workshop leader. She is married to Martus Miley, pastor of River Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, and they have three adult daughters. Got feedback? Write her at [Writer2530@aol.com](mailto:Writer2530@aol.com).*

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