

## Ten Fingers and Ten Toes

---

Picture a couple in the delivery room of a hospital—excited, but a little scared, too: timing, breathing, counting together. When our children were born, I had to stay in a waiting room—or in one case, in the hallway just outside the delivery room. I envy my sons, who have been present to share the experience with their wives.

Either way, there is an air of anxious anticipation. Sometimes the process is delayed, and the mood becomes anxious. But in most cases, the hour comes, and we finally hear the words we've been waiting for: "He's got ten fingers and ten toes"—and we know the baby is normal and well. Ten Fingers and Ten Toes.

Our scripture this morning is about a birth:

(LUKE 2:1-7 NRSV) *In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was*

*descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

You know, I'm not sure we really think of Jesus as a real baby: ten fingers and ten toes. Maybe he seems more like a fairy tale or a Dr. Seuss character. It may even come as a shock to think of Jesus as a real baby. I remember Erma Fox, who was our Craig's Sunday School teacher when he was two and three years old. Erma was an excellent Sunday School teacher. It was her gift and she saw it as her calling. She had been teaching two- and three-year-olds for over thirty years. She prepared early every week: read her lesson on Monday, gathered her materials on Tuesday, and you could always find her at the church on Friday afternoon, setting up her room for Sunday morning.

During Advent one year Erma set up a nativity area in a corner of her room, with a life-size doll in the manger. She wanted the children to play with the doll—to experience the baby Jesus as real; only, it was she who did the learning.

On Sunday Craig, was playing with the doll: "Baby Jesus taking a nap." "Baby Jesus wake up." "Uh-oh, Baby Jesus got a dirty diaper."

When she told us about it later Erma said, "My first impulse was to say, 'No, no!' But I realized, if he was a real baby!"

I remember the words of a cantata we sang years ago: "The hands of God that formed the world from nothing, will touch the earth with fingers of a child." And later in that same song: "Great love of God, your heart beats warm and tender"

within the tiny body of this boy."

It really came home to me watching my grandchildren sleep in my arms—or wiping the pudding from their drooling chins—or listening to their laughter as their daddies would swing them 'round and 'round, or to their crying when mommy drove away. I wonder if Mary and Joseph noted these things, too. Real baby—ten fingers—ten toes.

There's something so very special about the hands of a child—ten fingers that hold one adult finger like you and I hold a baseball bat, or a hammer.

And the feet of a child: ten toes. Do you supposed Mary played "This little piggy went to market?" Do you suppose baby Jesus giggled with delight as his mother tickled his tiny toes?

Ten fingers and ten toes; hands that learned to handle a hammer and a saw—and grew strong and callused—real fingers—dirt under the fingernails—real feet that got sweaty and dirty walking the dusty Galilean roads.

Hands that brought sight to blind eyes or made a lame man walk with just a touch; feet that walked on water.

Hands that washed the feet of his disciples; hands that took bread, and broke it, and poured wine. Feet that really touched the ground—and left footprints leading outside the city gate—up to a place called "Skull Hill". Hands and feet that were nailed to a cross—real hands that bled, and scarred.

Growing up, and even after I began my ministry, I heard stories about people in the church—even preachers—who didn't believe in the divinity of Christ. I suppose there are some around. I've never met one. I've never heard a single person say, "I'm a Christian; Jesus is my savior; but I don't believe in his divinity."

But I have seen and heard many deny, by word or deed, his humanity.

- ✌ When we confess, in church on Sunday, that Jesus is savior of our souls, but don't live, at work or at home, Monday through Saturday, with him guiding our everyday living, we deny his humanity.
- ✌ When we affirm him as Lord of our personal morality, but don't live by his ethics in our relationships with others, we deny his humanity.
- ✌ When we endorse him as Lord of our prayer life but not of our calendar, we deny his humanity—and in the process we make our calendars our real Lord.
- ✌ When we discount our own value as persons—or as Christians—we deny his humanity. When we say, "I can't follow him; after all, he's the Son of God, and 'I'm just human'." Jesus was human; and he said, "All that I do, you will do; and greater things than I do, you will do."

Maybe that's why some people have trouble accepting the total humanity of Jesus. Most people have no problem with the divinity of Christ; that's comfortable. We can use his divinity as an excuse: he was, after all, divine; I'm "only human."

But *if he's human*—if his feet touch the ground—there'll be those footprints, and we'll be called to follow. If we follow those footprints—if we're obedient—those footprints may lead to places we don't want to go.

Jesus came, not only as "Son of God;" but also as "Son of Man". He came not only to bring eternal life in the future, but also abundant life in the present. Jesus is Lord, not only of heaven, but also Lord of our world: "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords".

And, above all—even when he was a tiny baby in a manger—a real baby with ten fingers and ten toes—even then, he was Immanuel. Even then, in him God was already with us.