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The Word Became A Human Being

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Text: John 1:1-14 (ABC - Christmas Day)

There is a man...I don't know his name. I know only that day after
day he paces back and forth on the main floor of the Kitchener Bus
Terminal. Twelve paces towards Charles Street. Twelve paces towards
Victoria School.

The same twelve paces over and over again
hour after hour
day after day
cutting across the path of busy humanity.

I suppose he could be anywhere on earth, but it so happens that he
is here among us. If you go there, you will see him.

Twelve paces towards Victoria School,
Twelve paces towards Charles Street.

The same twelve paces over and over again
hour after hour
day after day.

While waiting for the bus one day last week I sat and watched him
and wondered about him for awhile. He wasn't bothering anybody, and
no one seemed to be bothering him, either. Every once in a while when
he ran into someone or someone ran into him, there wasn't a single
harsh word.

There is a rhythm to his walking, and before long, in that place that
is filled with hurry and in this season which is filled with hurry, I began
to slow down my pace and breathe in rhythm with the sound of his
footsteps...with the sound of his boots shuffling across the floor in a certain, reassuring cadence. Twelve steps towards Victoria School followed by a smooth turn on one foot and then twelve steps towards Charles Street.

While I was sitting there watching him, a crazy thought came into my head. What if this is he? What if this is the Word made flesh dwelling among us full of grace and truth?

What if this is God with us
silently walking in the same place where I walk,
present in the flesh,
cutting across the common pathway of human life;
by his presence making holy the ground he walks on
and marking the ground I walk on as holy, too?

Twelve steps towards Victoria School. Twelve steps towards Charles Street.
He leaves his mark on the place,
holy footprints in a common dark place
filled with travelling humanity.

From the moment I got up from the bench and continued my journey, over and over again when I’ve caught a glimpse of feet walking through the snow or on the pavement or on carpet, I’ve had the same thought. What if this one crossing my path is the one—making holy the ground beneath his or her feet?

Christ haunts the world with his presence, and there is nowhere on earth where he isn’t pacing back and forth,
looking at us intently,
his brow knit with concern for us;
marking each place a holy place,
a place where he has chosen to go.

Emmanuel.

God with us.
Pleased to be at home inside human skin.
First a little baby,
then an adult.

Now in the needs of each man, woman, or child
whose steps cross our steps,
whose needs cross our needs.

If in Bethlehem, why not here?
Twelve steps towards Victoria Street,
Twelve steps towards Charles Street.
At your house. In my house.
In Peru.
In Zaire and Rwanda and Burundi.
Across the world. Across the street.
Next door.
Here.

Twelve steps forward. Twelve steps back.
The sound of very human footsteps a sign of his presence with us.

Long ago the Word became a human being with hands and feet,
heart and mind, laughter and tears, hunger and thirst. The Word
became a human being breathing in and breathing out—therefore
destined to live and destined to die. He walked across creation and
made holy the very skin we inhabit.

And ever since God chose to make a home inside human flesh,
inside human skin, human skin has been good news. Our flesh is good news.
Never again will human flesh and blood, human laughter and tears, human hunger and thirst be far away from our God. God lives
inside the skin of the bus terminal stranger, for whatever reason pacing
twelve steps towards Victoria School and twelve steps towards Charles Street, back and forth in some kind of daze. God lives inside your skin.
God lives inside my skin.

The Word becomes flesh, full of grace and truth. He lives among us. Out of the fullness of his grace, still he blesses us with his presence.
Still he makes holy the common places of our lives—like the bus
terminal and the smoke hole out in back of the church and hospital rooms and the funeral home and that little piece of worn carpet in front of my kitchen sink and all the other places where he dwells with us.

Twelve paces forward,
    Twelve paces back,
    touching all creation with his footsteps.

As we’ll sing in our hymn of the day, Christ is pleased as man with us to dwell. There is nothing human where he’s not at home.

Wherever there is laughter and warmth and caring, Christ is no stranger.
    Look there, and you will see him celebrating.
    Wherever there is hunger and thirst and need for protection,
        look there, and you will see him in need.
    Wherever there is confusion, hurt, or fear,
        look there, and you will see his brow knit with concern.
    He lives in the places where there is deep longing for health and peace.

    He lives in the places where there is darkness and the shadow of death.
    Look in all these places, and you will find him.

There is no place on earth where he is not walking.
    Twelve steps forward.
    Twelve steps back.
    The Word made flesh and living among us,
        full of grace and truth.