The Infant King

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I remember the day
when the kitten first came
to live at our house.

It was so small,
and cute,
and adorable,
and dependent.

A tiny little ball of fur
with two great big oversized green eyes,
and just full of purr!

So small
I could tuck her completely into my pocket
with just her head sticking out!

And she would curl up
and go to sleep on anyone’s lap.

When she was hungry
she’d give tiny little “meows”
which we interpreted as:
“Please give me a bit of food.”

Well, things change.
The tiny kitten became, in her prime,
a twenty-one-and-a-half pound cat!
(Imagine carrying around two ten-pound sacks of potatoes in your pocket!)
When she meowed for something to eat
it sounded more like,
“Food! Lots of food! NOW!”
But, even now, sixteen years later, she's still full of purr!

The simple truth is, that when you go to the pet store and see the cute little kittens and adorable little puppies, there should be warning signs posted above the cages. And the signs should say:

**CAUTION!**
What you see is not what you get!

Kittens become cats, puppies become full-sized dogs. And it is the mature animal which will take over your home and your life for years to come.

And so we come again, as we do each year, to the stable outside Bethlehem.

And we join the procession of those who wish to see the new baby lying in a manger, warm, soft, fragile, and wondrously appealing.

The lullaby tells it all:
Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

No wonder Christmas is so wonderfully appealing. Even the most hard-hearted person finds it difficult to reject an endearing baby.

http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol29/iss2/8
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He is so easy to cope with;
his mother supplies all his needs;
his father stands guard over him.
All we have to do is admire him...
and who doesn’t oooh and aaah over a new baby!

But things change!
If our only exposure to Jesus
happens at Christmas
when he is portrayed as a helpless infant,
then we do not know Jesus at all!

This beautiful moment in time
when God became a human being,
coming into the world just as we all did,
so that God could truly identify with us,
does not represent how Jesus’ life would unfold.

The soft trappings of the manger scene
quickly turned to fearful flight into Egypt
as wicked King Herod in his hopeless paranoia
started killing babies,
hundreds of them.

And, except for one quick reference
to Jesus at the age of twelve,
we have no further sight of him in Scripture
until he appears as a mature man of thirty,
teaching and preaching with confidence,
healing the sick,
and turning the world upside down!

The real Jesus
is not asleep on the hay.
He’s teaching about being lost
and being found.
He’s openly talking about people’s faults and failures
and even their secret sins!
As he brings peace and forgiveness to one,
he triggers resentment and anger in others!

The real Jesus
isn’t just a historical figure
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whom I study and make judgments about.
He studies me!
And he makes judgments about me.
And he knows me — all about me.
He knows me better than I know myself.
There are no secrets that I can hide from him.

This Jesus spots me up a tree, like Zacchaeus,
and orders me down
so that he and I can meet and talk one-on-one,
and I can’t refuse!

This Jesus challenges my values
and standards and priorities;
and he suggests (even demands!)
that I consider a better way,
as he talks about God
and the Kingdom of Heaven.
He tells me that it really does matter
and makes a difference,
what my motives are.

The real Jesus
makes demands on me,
real demands.

I can’t satisfy him now by telling him
how adorable he was in the manger!

This Jesus says,
“Follow me!”
And he actually expects me to follow him!

He tells me that the burden will be light
(because he will always be near),
but then warns me that by following him
I may be called upon
to sacrifice everything I hold dear,
perhaps even my life.

He says that I must be willing
“to pick up my cross” and carry it through the streets.
The real Jesus confronts me openly when I’m wrong and need correcting.

He is no terrestrial elf representing a celestial Santa Claus of a God who winks at my sins and grins at the evil he sees.

No, he calls me to account not just for my actions but also for my words, and even my thoughts!

He takes me seriously, and treats me like a real person worth his time and emotion and sacrifice.

He wants the very best for me, and leads and pushes and prods. And won’t let me hide.

He tells me that I’m like a lost lamb, but he won’t give up on me.

And I must never give up on me, either. Together, he and I will strive toward the image of God which he says is still within me.

What all this means is that our relationship with Jesus can never be confined to the scene in Bethlehem.

Jesus himself did not make one single reference to his own birth in any of his teachings or ministry. He never said, “Believe in me, because I was such a cute baby!”

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What he did say, repeatedly,
is that he came into the world
to seek and to save the lost,
and that he would give his own life
for my sake,
and yours,
and that we must follow him.

So now as we return to the stable
and peek inside,
we see a beautiful but temporary scene.

We know the rest of the story.
This child will change the world.
This child will change my life and yours.
This child is to become the Saviour of the world.
This child is God incarnate.

And when you accept Jesus
as the Christ Child,
you also get Jesus the mature man.

And when you accept Jesus
the Son of Man,
you also get Jesus
the Son of God.

Perhaps...
there should be a sign over the doorway of the stable:

CAUTION!
The little baby inside
has grown up
and wishes to talk to you.
NOW!