
It's a Miracle

A Christmas Eve Morning Reflection by the Rev. Canon George Maxwell Christmas Eve, Year A

We often carry with us certain images that quietly frame how we look at the world. We don't realize they are there, but they determine what we pay attention to and how we understand it. For me, one such image is a memory from many years ago: the first sonogram of our oldest child.

I remember the dimly lit room, the soft hum of the machine, and the technician's almost relentless cheerfulness. Each time she paused to take a measurement, she offered a reassurance—we can rule this out or we don't have to worry about that. I know she was trying to help. She was offering what she could: information, reassurance, professional competence. Yet instead of calming me down, she was winding me up. I had not known there were so many things that could go wrong. Each reassurance seemed to open the door to another unspoken possibility. I remember thinking, with a tightening in my chest, "What else are they not telling me?"

The screen showed a grainy, flickering image that was recognizable, but not distinct. Something was happening there, something immensely important, but I could not see it clearly, and I certainly could not control it. And then, rather unexpectedly, another feeling began to take over. The fear did not disappear, but it loosened its grip. What came in its place was awe ... and wonder. I found myself standing before something that was delicate and astonishing. Life! It dawned on me that life itself is not just a gift; it is a miracle. Not because it is guaranteed, but because it is not. So many things must align, so many processes unfold in quiet cooperation, for a child to be born at all. The odds are not reassuring. And yet, here is life.

I have been present at several births since then, and I have had the privilege of welcoming many newborn children into the world through my ministry. But I have never lost that first sense of wonder, that mixture of vulnerability and amazement. Every year, it returns with particular clarity when we come to the Christmas story. For what the Christian faith places at its center is not an idea, not a system, not even a finished explanation. It's a child. God comes among us not as an answer to the world's questions, but as a life within the world—a life still forming, still dependent, and still exposed to risk.

The infancy narratives themselves are remarkably restrained. They do not tell us very much. They offer us glimpses: a birth under pressure, a young mother pondering what she does not yet understand, strangers drawn by rumors and dreams. Like that sonogram screen, we are given just enough to recognize that something decisive is happening, but never enough to master it. A child's life begins surrounded by unknowns, and growth happens slowly, day by day, shaped by care, attention, and trust. By entering the world in this way, God chooses not only to share our humanity in general terms, but to share our vulnerability in the most concrete way possible. God's life takes shape within ordinary uncertainty, within bodies that grow, communities that protect and sometimes fail, and histories that are never secure.

This matters deeply, especially on a morning like this. Many of us live with the quiet assumption that if we only had enough information, we would feel safe. If we could see clearly enough, plan carefully enough, anticipate accurately enough, we might protect ourselves from uncertainty. We measure, calculate, and manage—not foolishly, but with the hope that knowledge will give us control. Yet anyone who has welcomed a child knows that this hope can only go so far. Love does not wait for guarantees. It cannot. Love begins precisely when we consent to care for what we cannot fully protect.

The Christmas story places God unmistakably inside that reality. God does not wait for the world to be safe before entering it. God does not arrive once all the risks have been neutralized. God comes while things are still fragile, still unfinished, still exposed. Grace, in this light, is not a way of removing vulnerability. It is a commitment to accompany it. Grace does not stand at a distance offering explanations or assurances. Grace

draws close. Grace stays.

The child in the manger becomes a person marked by attentiveness and relationship. Healing happens through closeness. Teaching unfolds through shared meals and stories. And when suffering comes—as it inevitably does—God does not step aside. The openness of that early, dependent life continues all the way to the cross. Seen in this light, Christmas reshapes what we mean by faith. Faith is not the possession of clarity. It is not the confidence that we understand how things will unfold. Faith is the practice of trust amid partial knowledge. It is learning how to remain present—to God, to one another, and to ourselves—without demanding certainty as the price of commitment.

A church shaped by this story becomes a place where people are not rushed toward resolution. It becomes a community where unfinished lives are not problems to be solved but realities to be honored, where growth is allowed to take time, and where vulnerability is met with patience rather than fear. On Christmas Eve morning, we find ourselves standing somewhere very like that sonogram room: aware of hope and of how much remains unclear, grateful and perhaps a little overwhelmed, sensing that something precious is being entrusted to us even though we cannot yet see what it will become.

And into that space—into that mixture of awe and uncertainty—God comes. Not to remove all risk. Not to explain everything. But to share life from the inside. So on this morning, we are invited simply to receive what is already here: a child, a presence, a life unfolding in our midst. And in receiving that gift, without trying to master it or protect ourselves from it, we may discover once again what it means to say, quietly and reverently, that this is a miracle.

Amen.