

We've just come through the season in the church calendar that I love the most. Besides all of the beauty and the trappings of Christmas, it is the actual Incarnation that makes Christmas so wondrous for me. All these years in the church and I'm still hung up on God in a human body, grown in the womb of a human woman and birthed from her body into the world. I still can't believe that this is how our Story goes.

And I don't know that it was necessary. God could have sent us messages about who we were and how we should love others, how we should bring about redemption and renewal everywhere we go. But we have the Incarnation. The Word became flesh.

That word flesh is so gritty and raw and unpolished to me. It's not really a polite word. We don't use it a lot in referring to our physical bodies.

And that untidiness of the word flesh works for me. Because when I look at the Incarnation - at God inhabiting a human body - the whole deal doesn't look very polite or polished to me. I see Jesus living out a very gritty, physical, inhabited experience. He fed people so they wouldn't be hungry, touched people who were rejected for their illness or disability, he welcomed tears, perfume and hair upon his feet as a sign of love and acceptance and before he fulfilled his purpose on earth, he himself crouched down and washed dirty feet. He dwelt among us.

Jesus ignored distinctions between the physical and the spiritual, the body and the soul. Fully human, fully God. The Word become flesh. When people asked Jesus what God was like or what the Kingdom of God was like, he told stories about their lives, about them. He told them what to do instead of what to believe. And I don't think he was telling stories so they would understand - watering down Godly concepts for undereducated, underliterate peasants of the ancient Middle east - I think he was telling them what mattered - birds, seeds, trees, and what we do with our physical selves.

In the Incarnation God showed us that the Divine exists in flesh and that our bodies are part of God's way of being in the world (McBride). Jesus showed us that we are each engaged in the daily practice of incarnation. I think Jesus understood and modelled to us the fact that by our very existence, because we occupy physical space, our bodies are inherently political. He was called out when he and his friends collected wheat on the Sabbath or didn't wash their hands before eating and of course there was the ultimate act of disruption - the resurrection.

When I stand quietly downtown and watch police officers interact with a young, racialized man who is clearly experiencing a mental health crisis, I am acting as a witness (and the police know exactly what I'm doing). When I stand on a rail blockade or outside a court house or walk down University Avenue in a march I am occupying physical space and I'm communicating a message with my body and I'm enacting solidarity with peoples who have asked us to.

I want to be careful here that we realize we can't talk about loving God with our bodies and fully inhabiting the bodies we have without truly recognizing that, for the majority of the people on this call, we live in a society that has been designed (or manipulated) to value our bodies more than those of other people.

I increasingly feel the privilege that is awarded to my body and to those who look and sound like me. I am a tall, White, able-bodied, middle-aged, middle-class Mom. This allows me to move through all areas of society without arousing suspicion, unwanted

interaction, or any kind of violence. How much more responsible, then, am I to use this privilege to be fully embodied, to inhabit spaces, communicating solidarity, being a witness and calling out injustice.

As Nadia Bolz-Weber tells us, we are the flesh become word. We are the Creator God's physical representation here on this earth. Yet we are terrible at accessing this physical part of our created selves. We are taught that loving God is reading the Bible, doing our devotions, reading Karl Barth and being able to debate sprinkling vs pouring vs immersion. So how do we love the Lord our God with all our bodies?