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St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
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### Listening for our Newborn God

“Having kids will ruin your life for the better.”

That’s what one parishioner said to me a couple weeks before my husband and I welcomed our little baby into the world this past September.

“It’ll ruin your life – pause - for the better.”

I thought of this line so many times over the past three months.

As I became an expert diaper changer,  
As I navigated the days after the sleepless nights,  
And cooed and sang to our little one.

These past 14 weeks with our little baby Abe have given me a fresh perspective on what it must have been like to welcome baby Jesus.

Gone are any romantic notions of “silent and holy nights.”<sup>1</sup>

Those images now replaced with the much messier and ultimately more holy realities of birth and parenting.

This Christmas I find myself looking at the sacred story through a whole new set of eyes.

I don’t imagine a manger scene from a distance.

There’s a flesh and substance to the story that I never quite grasped.

Now I visualize “Our Lord and Savior” spitting up.

I imagine the “Prince of Peace” blowing out a diaper after feeding at Mary’s breast.

I see the “Wonderful Counselor” so vulnerable he couldn’t even hold his head up on his own.

And now, the image of Jesus as newborn,

Feels far more scandalous to me than the image of Jesus on the cross.

“This, this is Christ the King”<sup>2</sup>...utterly vulnerable...

Relying on the hospitality of a young woman’s womb before taking his place in the world as a completely helpless baby.

And I imagine someone saying to Mary just before she gave birth – “This will ruin your life for the better.”

And how true that was for her too.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/silent\\_night\\_holy\\_night\\_all\\_is\\_calm\\_all](https://hymnary.org/text/silent_night_holy_night_all_is_calm_all)

<sup>2</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/what\\_child\\_is\\_this\\_who\\_laid\\_to\\_rest](https://hymnary.org/text/what_child_is_this_who_laid_to_rest)

Another thing people said to us before Abe's birth was that we'd never sleep well again.  
That certainly feels accurate right now.

And I've heard it doesn't get better.

Because even when they're older, you keep your phone near to make sure you're reachable if they need you, at any hour of the night.

You're always *listening*.

I can't count the times my husband Joe and I have said to each other, "Was that him?" when we think we hear Abe crying from his crib.

Your hearing changes with a baby.

Suddenly you're *always* vigilant for their coos and cries.

What if we adopted this same attitude with Jesus?

Not just Jesus as newborn, but Jesus as full-grown Savior of the world.

Imagine if we were *always* listening for his voice in our lives?

His cries in our world?

"Was that him?" we'd ask each other.

"Was that him we just heard?"

The next thing that happens after the question "was that him?" isn't to just sit there.

You don't ask that question, hear a baby crying, and then just keep eating your dinner.

You get up.

You go.

When your teenager calls at 2am you don't ignore the call.

You hear a cry or a call,

And you *respond*.

Call and response.

What if we could be ever so attentive to those cries and calls of Jesus?

Once we've chosen to be always listening for him,

What if then we pledged to always respond?

Do you feel a pull in your life to do something different?

Do you hear Jesus' call when you pass homeless people on the street,

And when you see injustice in the world?

It's that tug in our hearts and on our conscience that won't go away.

And it's not something to ignore.

But something to which we respond.

Perhaps the biggest gift of motherhood so far is that it's deepened my understanding of love.

I love that child more than anything. *Anything*.

And then I think of Mary holding her baby son in her arms all those generations ago,

And I think of how her heart must have exploded with love that night too.

But not just hers.

The entire *world* shone that night with “the love that came down.”<sup>3</sup>

God entered the world like all babies do – just wanting to give and receive love.

God arrives into the mess of our lives looking to be held in our arms,

Because God is helplessly in love with us.<sup>4</sup>

This is the newborn God we greet this night.

“A child and yet a king,”<sup>5</sup> who’s cooing and crying,

And demanding our response.

We take a step towards him now,

Lying there in the manger,

Knowing that little babies – whether human or divine –

Change everything.

They’ll ruin our lives...for the better. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/love\\_came\\_down\\_at\\_christmas](https://hymnary.org/text/love_came_down_at_christmas)

<sup>4</sup> Thank you to The Rev. Dale Grandfield for the conversation that led to this thought.

<sup>5</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/what\\_child\\_is\\_this\\_who\\_laid\\_to\\_rest](https://hymnary.org/text/what_child_is_this_who_laid_to_rest)