Christmas is about God coming to us, not God in the abstract, but God in the human. However, we often live lives that are so far away from our humanity, our difficulties and struggles. Sociologist, Parker Palmer, wants to help us become born anew, anew in our own selves, anew in God who has become embodied.

**Questions for Reflection**

1. Palmer starts the interview by saying, “…One of the most important words in the Christian tradition, and behind that word is one of the most important gifts of the Christian tradition in my life, is the idea of the incarnation and the reality of the incarnation, of the Word becoming flesh.” Palmer then admits that “in the academic culture the ‘word’ often becomes disembodied.”

   What does the word “incarnation” mean to you?
   How have education and even the church become disembodied?

2. Palmer goes on to say that “the notion of the Word becoming flesh has powerful meaning.” It has shaped his life helped to keep to him “grounded.”

   How does this notion keep us grounded? How can it shape our lives?

3. Palmer talks about how the “Christmas story is such a simple and human story about a baby being born under very difficult circumstances. It is a story about God taking a risk of showing up in the flesh.”

   How might “showing up in the flesh” be a risky act for God?

4. Palmer observes that God takes “the risk of being fully human,” but ironically this is the “risk that we shy away from.”

   Why might we shy from being fully human? What does it mean for us to be fully human?
5. Palmer says, “The Christmas story, for me, is a constant reminder that the calling is really to being born and to re-born and born again and again, in the shape of my own true self.”

How might we allow this story continually birth new life in us? How is the Christian birth story not a one-time event, but a continuous event?

6. Palmer observes that “It’s a very hard story to retrieve in the midst of a culture that obviously commercializes it to death, and sometimes in the midst of a church that is more drawn to triumphalism than it is to the simplicity of what I think of as the real thing.”

How is the church more drawn to the triumphal aspects of the story rather than the most difficult aspects? How does this triumphalism deny the incarnation?

7. Palmer sees his own life wrapped around the life of the Christ baby: “A baby is very vulnerable. A baby needs nurturing and tending. That is also true of whatever part of me it is that wants to now come out of hiding, that wants to be embodied and incarnate in the world. And I need that kind of unconditional love that needs that kind of nurturing and tending.”

What does this life of this vulnerability and need say about our own lives? In what ways do we need nurturing and tending?

8. Lastly, Palmer recounts a story of being a child and “sitting in church and not understanding that [story], but intuiting it and really being brought to tears.” Palmer confesses that he could not fully articulate “what the tears were about,” but now he can begin to speak about it.

In what ways does this story touch us at a very primitive level? How do we begin to tell the story of God’s presence in our lives in away that is not “disembodied” from the hardships and realities of this world?