

A Christmas reflection

My God is a migrant

My God isn't just a God who cares about migrants – or a God who calls himself the God *of* migrants – although he is both of these things of course.

My God *is* a migrant.

He's always on the move.

Leaving heavens and holy places and accepted hierarchies to show up in unexpected places – asking strangers and highly inappropriate people to welcome him in, or sit down and eat with him.

Yes, my God is a migrant.

He writes, and stars in, countless, ceaseless, stories of perpetual motion.

He can't stop still.

It's been going on since he invented time.

He came and walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the garden's evening light; he broke the ultimate sound barrier to talk plans and promises with Noah and Abraham and so many more.

He dreamed Joseph and his whole family into Egypt, manifested himself at bush and mountain to meet Moses; then led all his people out of it again in a constant, 40 year long criss-crossing the desert journey, always staying one step ahead of them through alternate pillars of cloud and fire until finally, eventually, they were mature enough to settle.

And then 2000 plus years ago, he out did himself. Upped sticks completely if you like. Half split a third of himself off, and brought this precious part of him out of complete perfection and unity to enter our mess completely. Whole-hearted, cosmic re-location.

This ultimate rescue plan was properly risky – dangerously, recklessly, lovingly risky.

He comes in human form.

And what vessel does he choose to board with such precious cargo to bring us?

A virgin's womb.

So much could have gone wrong. Bethlehem just before AD didn't have twenty first century, state of the art, Western healthcare. Pregnancy didn't have great odds. Childbirth the same. And devout Jewish virgins? Well let's just say there could have been plenty of angry men waiting in the wings ready to throw enough stones to end it all before it had barely begun.

But my God makes it.

He does it.

The virgin accepts – risks it all to carry him with brave “yes to God” worship and he’s nurtured and grown and born.

And then he’s just lying there.

For a while at least, the God of the universe is utterly dependent on his mother’s arms for everything; life, safety and even this thing he so loves – movement. He’s just there lying on his back unable to crawl, let alone walk – totally at the mercy of the elements, of people’s whims; dependent on the success of harvests and a carpentry business and an open, uneducated but willing heart listening and obeying the counsel of his dreams in order to avoid certain death for his “God-son”.

Yes, that’s the bit of the story we’ve made the parallel to before isn’t it?

Yes, my God was a refugee. He had to flee Bethlehem in the night and seek asylum in Egypt to escape Herod’s anger.

But it’s bigger than that chapter. It’s like a mission statement for his whole life.

Because when he grew up, he chose to do it all again. Perpetual motion that is.

The settled life, the carpenter’s shop, the family connections and expectations of Nazareth... he left those all behind for a life on the road, travelling light, choosing to become dependent on Eastern hospitality and his followers’ generosity, so he himself could give everything for those he met.

He put himself at the mercy of the anyone’s welcome so he could welcome *everyone* into God’s creative, reconciling plan. He shared the endless, abundant riches of the kingdom – the Father’s limitless resources, seemingly holding on to little or nothing in transit.

And the vulnerability of it all? The unorthodox, counter-cultural, shockingly revolutionary nomadic nature of it all?

Well it earned him a lot of enemies.

It got him into a lot of trouble with the religious establishment.

It didn’t go down with those keen on rules above grace and definitions over welcome.

There was as much rejection as acceptance. Probably much more.

And within three years of living like this, he got himself killed.

But I guess, he never intended to stay put in Israel anyway.

Death was always going to be his gateway to the ultimate in downward mobility; he was always coming to rescue even deeper – fearlessly move towards death himself to conquer it with grave-breaking, life-saving, dawn-dimming love!

Thank God my God is a migrant.

Thank God he didn’t stay separate and far away from us.

Thank God he came and asked for our welcome.

Thank God he gives us endless chances as he moves towards us again and again and again.

Thank God he's still moving among us now – constantly asking us if we'll welcome him.

He's here now, asking us to receive him again...

Will we say yes to his presence? His conviction? His transformation? His technicolour-shalom vision of hope and purpose for each one of our lives? Will we say yes to the revelation and obedience his Word is asking us for...

...and to each migrant face and story his own is reflected in so uniquely?

"Yes I see you. Yes, I value you. Yes I'm ready to listen, to welcome, to somehow find an impossible, gracious, Godly way forward."

Yes, my God is a migrant.

And I say yes to seeing him in every migrant too.

Oh, that Western hospitality might make you welcome my Lord.

Everywhere you knock, everything you ask, in every area of our hearts and lives, oh that we would answer yes and amen to you.

Please, Jesus, help us to let you depend on us in your vulnerability, test our love and our welcome, and enter in more fully – please be born in us again today.

In your mercy, migrant God, move us all to where we need to be to match and minister your heart – to you, and to all you came, and are coming, and will still come for – and with.