

2022 01 02 – The Gift and the Truth

John 1:1-18 (The Inclusive Bible)

I know many of you may have already taken down your Christmas tree and even put away your lights other decorations; but, you know what... it is still Christmas. In fact today is the ninth day of the Christmas season and there are three more days to go! So, according to our church calendar, this is the time of the year to be singing Christmas carols, this is the time of year to be eating Christmas pudding and this is the time of year to be giving Christmas gifts.

So it is appropriate that our scripture reading for today has a Christmas theme. It is, in fact, the Christmas story as it is found in the Gospel of John. I know there is no mention of Mary or Joseph, the shepherds or even the Magi. But it is an origin story, a poem that attempts to explain not only the beginning, but also the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, it explains Jesus' reason for being.

But before we can get to that we need to have a little lesson in Greek. You see the New Testament was not originally written in English. The versions that we read have been translated from Greek manuscripts. Sometimes it is important for us to go back to those ancient manuscripts and take a look at a particular word or phrase in order to try and understand the author's original meaning. This is especially true with today's reading from the Gospel of John.

If you remember, Sharon read:

In the beginning
there was the Word,

and the Word was in God's presence,
and the Word was God.
The Word was present to God
from the beginning.

So what is this "Word" that was in God's presence? When we go back to the original manuscript, we realize that "Word" has been translated from the Greek "Logos." And scholars tell us that:

By the time of Jesus, logos had come to mean the creative power of God ... Philo, a first century philosopher, saw logos as flowing from God ... as the mechanism through which God created the universe.

https://www.progressiveinvolvement.com/progressive_involvement/2019/12/christmas-2-john-1-1-18.html

So, Logos, the Word, is the creative power or energy of God. And the author of this Gospel goes on to say that this Logos or Word was also the light, the light that darkness could not overcome. We, of course, would equate that power, that energy, that light, with Love, God's everlasting and unconditional love.

But the author of this Gospel goes even further. He says that there was a man named John, sent by God to testify to this light. Now we just went through Advent, so we all know that John, the baptizer, was the cousin of Jesus and that he spent his life preparing the way for Jesus. John wanted the people of Judea to know that his cousin, Jesus, was coming to change their world.

So the author of this Gospel is telling us that Logos, the Word, the Light, the Love of God, was found in none other than Jesus himself. Jesus was that creative energy of God let loose in the world, that true Light that illumines all humankind.

Now the author knows how Jesus died. When he wrote this poem, it was 50-60 years after Jesus' crucifixion. He knew that Jesus' ministry had not ended well. The author writes, "though the Word came to its own realm, the Word's own people didn't accept it." The author is admitting that even the creative power of God's love can only go so far. We have to meet it half way. We have to at least be willing to turn toward that love, we have to willing to recognize that love when it appears in our lives.

Too often we get stuck in the pain and the struggle of life and we don't even see the light in the darkness. Even now, as the Omicron variant overtakes our lives and the cold of winter keeps us huddled inside our homes, it would be easy to let the disappointment, the loneliness, the uncertainty, and the fear overtake us yet again.

It is up to us to reach out and find God's love all around us. It is up to us, to phone that person that we haven't yet connected with this Christmas season. It is up to us to reach out to our neighbour for help when we can't do our own grocery shopping or snow shovelling. It is up to us to care for ourselves, to curl up with that book we've been meaning to read or that movie we've meaning to watch. Logos, God's creative, loving energy is all around us even in the cold night of winter. We just need to accept it, to receive it.

In fact, the author assures us that, “any who did accept the Word, who believed in that Name, were empowered to become children of God.” You see once we accept the love of God, then we become like Jesus; we become the light, the Word, the Logos. We become the ones who not only receive, but also spread God’s love in the world. That is what it means to be a child of God.

And the Word became flesh
and stayed for a little while among us;
and we saw the Word’s glory—
the favour and position a parent gives an only child—
filled with grace,
filled with truth.

There it is, the Christmas story. The story of the birth of God’s creative energy, God’s loving power in one of us, in a human being. The story of the gift that was Jesus’ life on this earth. A life that was lived so that we might know God, a life that was the revelation of the Holy Mystery, the Ground of our Being.

There it is, the Christmas story. The story of the gift of God’s love, the gift of Logos, the Word:

a creative energy that was with God at the beginning of creation;
a creative energy that was with Jesus, a man who embodied God’s Spirit
in a way that we can only attempt to emulate;
a creative energy that exists within each one of us.

May we all discover the truth that Jesus was sent to give us, the truth of Logos, God’s creative power, the truth of God’s amazing grace.