

Christmas Day

The Message, that modern paraphrase of the Bible greatly illuminates our gospel: "The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. Everything was created through him, nothing -- not one thing!-- came into being without him. What came into existence was life, and the Life was light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness, the darkness couldn't put it out."

The Word of God who is First before all that was created came and put people first. You and I! He became one of us.

God came as a child that people might remember that He belongs to the human family. God subjects his Son to the human condition. To put it rather bluntly, Jesus goes potty in the manger! The swaddling clothes have to be changed and Jesus cries and the laundry is waiting to be done! God subjects himself to every possible human frailty and frustration. He understands the "poopiness" of life that we might know God surely is with us!

"The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness, the darkness couldn't put it out." God in Jesus grows up in human packaging relentlessly

seeking to make the last first. It's the only way mankind could participate in the divine drama. God could have started over and redesigned man for better behavior, yet decides to bring back his last creation from the depths of despair.

God stoops to the lowest level and raises us up to the level of His Son. The scripture can only tell us the story about that story (the birth, life, death, and new life of Jesus). Jesus the Word of Life is that story lived out, two thousand years ago, now and forever.

In John's gospel we hear the how and the why of this new birth in terms that seem better suited for a Humanities professor. I say Humanities because it deals with the classical ancient world, as it was understood before John's gospel was written. John was appealing to the thinkers of his day. The influence of Greek thought was pervasive. The all-pervading principle of the **Logos** was a Greek philosophical term referring to the "**world-soul**" or "**soul of the universe.**" **This pantheism** was the rational principle of the universe, the **Eternal Reason** and creative energy. All things came from the **logos** and from the **logos** all people derived their wisdom. These concepts dated back to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus in the sixth century. The Stoics came later and

went back to the original idea of an all-pervading logic and developed it further to express for them "a force" that originated, permeated, and directed all things. It was the governing principle of the universe. It was the "Force" against the "Dark" side.

Why was John dabbling in such opposing belief systems? He could have trounced on the idea of the Creator being the same as his creation and be done with it. Should he not have kept his distance from vain philosophies and false religion? He could not, he did not and he should not because he was making an apology and a defense of the Christian faith to Gentile and Jew alike. John saw the Word not as a concept, nor a principle nor a teaching but as living, active thought able to gather, hold together and sustain by his power.

Something was missing from the ideas of the Humanities that John amplified. The pure logic of the philosophers would make sense for his Greek readers but John's gospel went a step further. John made his appeal to the Jewish idea of the Logos as a personal pre-existent Wisdom as found in the Proverbs (8th Chapter). What John did was create a symphony of understanding, a milkshake in the blender by

adding what the others had missed and bringing two world-views together.

John attempted to convey to his contemporaries that Jesus is not some static part of speech, emitted from the tip of God's tongue that looks pretty on the pages of university textbooks. Jesus the Word is the signet ring worn by the Creator whose royal seal is impressed on the very fabric of the world! Jesus is God's power and governing principle in action, maintaining, sustaining and entertaining the universe. Jesus is the Divine Light that gives man a foretaste of knowledge and understanding of a living God. Jesus, the **Logos**, God's Son, in due time was sent in Christmas wrapping, so the world could share in God's experience and share His life!

Many years ago, I worked as a young operating nurse in Miami Beach, Florida. The experiences I found there profoundly affect me even today. One night, on call, I was brought into the hospital's Intensive Care Unit where a 42-year-old man had lost his blood pressure. He was recovering from a routine by-pass operation. Not knowing what I could do I prayed that the surgeon would arrive safely on the scene and tell us what to do. He came and proceeded to do a remarkable thing - at least to

me. He opened the man's chest reached in and grabbed his heart. He squeezed the heart for minutes at a time raising the blood pressure to normal ranges. I continued to pray.

Then something else remarkable happened. I was ordered to scrub in, gown and glove, and substitute for the only man in the hospital who could save the patient's life. I prayed. I squeezed. I got yelled at for not squeezing hard enough. I prayed again. And squeezed some more. The surgeon rested long enough to get his hand back inside, keep the pressure normal and stabilize the bleeding on the man's heart. The surgical team took the man back to the OR and saved his life.

Until the order was given by the surgeon to assist, I had not fully entered into and shared in this man's life. I was an outsider. I had some skills and a deep faith that others I worked with knew. Yet, I might as well have read words on a printed page. Until the command was given to share in this man's life and death, only then could I know and understand his need.

God did that for you and me. He reached down inside the soul with the Word of life, Jesus, and touched the very core of our being.

The Word, became flesh so we might understand that God is with us, is personal and

desires to communicate. The Divine Logic becomes one of us so we might become one with him.

The Danish Christian philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard has written:

“Although the scribes could explain where the Messiah should be born, they remained quite unperturbed in Jerusalem. They did not accompany the Wise Men to seek him. Similarly we may be able to explain every article of our faith, yet remain spiritually motionless. The power that moved heaven and earth leaves us completely unmoved. “What a contrast! The three kings had only a rumor to go by. But it spurred them to set out a long, hard journey. The scribes, meanwhile, were much better informed, much better versed. They had sat and studied the scriptures for years, like so many dons. But it didn’t make any difference. Who had the more truth? Those who followed a rumor, or those who remained sitting, satisfied with all their knowledge?”

Jesus comes into our life not by culture, not by our parents nor by our own will. To be adopted means to be chosen. To be chosen by God has nothing to do with who we are or what our name is. Ironically, God gave up his Son for human adoption at Christmas time so that we in

kind would adopt and choose him! What a wonderful thing to be chosen! What a wonderful thing to hear, "I love you and I picked you, even though you were the runt of the litter."

God came at Christmas, giving all that believe him second birth. He did not travel from outer space. He did not come to us from a textbook. He was as near as the gift of faith. He chose us. He gave us life and light to see our way on the journey. Receiving him we are given a passport to become his children. We are rescued from death. Those who followed Moses out of Egypt did not all reach the Promised Land. Those who hear the gospel preached from generation to generation do not all follow Christ. Yet all God's children come to the true light. They love their adopted Dad. He sent Jesus to search out all those who would come to Him. Adoption of the finite was made possible by the love of the infinite. God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, has made him known. The journey from Bethlehem begins! The shepherds and Wise men continue to sing! The heart of the Father has been revealed! From the fullness of his power we are given gift after gift! Go in peace and live with Jesus. May we live that his glory might shine in this dark world and overcome it! Amen.

