

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.^[b]

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own,^[c] and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,^[d] full of grace and truth.

Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
³ You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
⁴ For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
⁶ For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

December 24, 2017

“The Long Walk of Darkness”

John 1:1-14, Isaiah 9:2-7

Kerra Becker English

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

The people who walked in the darkness have seen a great light.

There’s a problem if you only see the light.

Seeing only the light means ignoring the pain of the world, trying to live above it or beyond it.

Some churches advocate for this position.

You have to see the blessing in everything and put on a happy face to fit in.

If you don’t, you aren’t faithful enough or maybe you have disappointed God.

But this light is artificial. Man-made. And could burn out at any moment.

Then, where would you be? In the dark.

There’s a problem if you only see the dark.

Seeing only the dark means that you have lost the ability to trust.

This happens, with reason in traumatic situations, and it also happens when what we get isn’t what we’d hoped for.

You learn to see the awful truth about everything.

There is no reason to be faithful, to what end? Will God save me? Probably not.

But this darkness doesn’t represent the whole truth.

Because, even in the darkness, a light, the true light is shining.

We have this daunting question as human beings.

We live in the real world, and know that the real world can be difficult, brutal in fact.

We know about cancer, and abuse, and poverty, and hate.

We can’t make those things – not so.

So we ask ourselves, is the universe, at the very least, benign?

Is the God we worship benevolent? Trustworthy? Loving, even?

Can we trust in this world that offers us reasons not to trust with every turn?

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Spiritual truth knows about the darkness.

Spiritual truth seeks comfort in the flickering of the light.

Sometimes, even the absence of God, is God.

As James Finley, a student of Thomas Merton, and spiritual leader in his own right has said:

When we are faced with hardship and the very dark night of the soul, we can despair, or we can go deeper.

Facing loss is what we do.

“The greatest teacher failure is.” Says Master Yoda in another spiritually sensitive universe.

So this morning, as we end Advent, and move toward the celebration of the incarnation,

God-with-us as human flesh, with all the fragility of every human emotion,

We face the darkness knowing that the light has come into the world.

And we will pray.

This morning we will pray for healing, for building up hope, for facing both the reality and the obscurity of our God. Our prayer time will start with singing together the first verse of “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” and Austin will continue to play music so you can offer prayer at your seat or come to Andrew or I in the front pews with your prayer requests. Feel free to ask for healing, for a blessing, for God’s presence, whatever you need. God is listening. This is a place of prayer, where a light can shine, for you, in the darkness.

Benediction:

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world

All things break. And all things can be mended.

Not with time, as they say, but with intention.

So go, love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.

The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.

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