

**Christmas Day – John 1:1-14**  
**St. Andrew's Episcopal Church – Sedona, AZ**

***Glorious Light.***

*“And the Word became flesh and lived among us,  
and we have seen his glory.”*

The writer of the Gospel of John is quite explicit and animate that the first community of Jesus followers had actually seen his glory;<sup>1</sup> had actually experienced his glory; had actually comprehended his glory. And in going back to the beginning of John's prologue, in which the Word was with God, and the Word was God, we can understand that these early Jesus followers actually beheld the glory of God in human flesh.

On this most festive day, we celebrate receiving the glory of God in human flesh and living among us. Yes, we too can proclaim that the glory of God is among us and within us because all things came into being through the Word – the self-revelation of God and the self-expression of God. On Christmas Eve, we retold the story of the incarnation of God in human form; the enfleshment of the Divine One as an infant, born of Mary, his human mother. Luke's birth narrative is beautifully described with glorious images of the heavenly realm reaching out to enlighten the earthly realm blessed into being by God's creative Word – nighttime and stars, fields and flocks, and shepherds

---

<sup>1</sup>[http://download.luthersem.edu/media/working\\_preacher/podcast/578WPBrainwave.mp3](http://download.luthersem.edu/media/working_preacher/podcast/578WPBrainwave.mp3)

– all created by God and beloved by God – all spoken into being for the sake of being in loving relationship with each other and their Creator.

In the prologue to John's Gospel, we are drawn back into the first words of Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew scriptures. Words that were so familiar to faithful Israelites that they told and retold this story of the beginnings of light and life with deep amazement and appreciation for the One who spoke everything into being, including human beings. Generations of believers have been enlivened to carry forward those expressions of Divine Love into each other's lives, that all might receive and experience God's glory in this earthly realm. The light and life of the world was and is an expression of God's love toward all that God creates and continues to create.

But along with light, there is darkness. Not just light with shadows marking the passing of daytime into nighttime. But darkness that threatens to overcome the light. Darkness that resists the light with such rebellious power, that it attempts to forcibly take over all that is good in God's creation. Darkness in our world is very real, and we can see and experience the power and energy of darkness in the actions and activities of humans who deny God's light and life animating all that is good in creation.

We hear very clearly in the binary language of John's prologue and throughout the Fourth Gospel that there exists ongoing tension between light and dark, good and evil, light and death. We are well aware that dualistic

imagery may initially be a helpful way into discerning an idea or situation, but life is much more complex and nuanced than black and white. The frailty of human hearts and minds is always being influenced by a full spectrum of light and dark in the world. In biblical language, we recognize the influence that temptation has on our thoughts and actions. And when we stay present to the light of Christ in the world, we recognize the darkness attempting to overpower the gift of God's love, and the life God intends for us. We resist and repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf.<sup>2</sup> We recognize how the craftiness of the snake lures us into sinful behavior and threatens our relationship with our Creator God. We acknowledge how humans can desire to be just as or more powerful than God. But the power that humans seek is not the kind of power that God models for us. God's power is creative and life-giving. It knows no bounds and is meant for all life – all creatures – all creation.

The darkness perpetrated by humans through violence, oppression, and exploitation is painfully visible in how we treat other human beings, animals, and the environment. It is this kind of darkness that God's light and love continues to transform with grace and truth. We know from life experiences that forgiveness and reconciliation flow through intentional processes of truth-telling. Sometimes, "telling it like it is" can be hate-filled, mean,

---

<sup>2</sup> *Enriching our Worship 1*, New York, NY: Church Publishing, Inc. (1998), 19.

accusatory, and marginalizing. But such pain-inflicting methods are not characteristics of Divine Love. In seeking to transform our ways toward God's ways, God chose to become human; to grace us with God's presence in human form for the sake of being in deeper loving relationship with us. In telling the truth about God's love for us, God came to be with us through Jesus. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have heard of his glory, and we have seen and experienced his glory.

The glory of God revealed to us through Jesus is shared with us through adoption. We are created in the image and likeness of God, and by adoption through Jesus we continue to be made new again through the salvific love of Christ. As children of God, we carry the spark of divinity that was in the beginning with God. And as siblings in Christ we are invited to reveal that spark of light and love through our relationships with each other and all creation. Whenever we do this, we are revealing Christ's glory in the world; we are joining with God in the re-creative act of incarnation. In celebrating the enfleshment of God in Jesus, and in receiving Jesus' animating Spirit, we become empowered and equipped to share the light of Christ with the world.

It is through the celebration of our life together as a faith community and as created and creative beings beloved by our Creator that we express God's presence and activity for each other. In the words of John the Baptist, we become witnesses to testify to the light, the true light, the light that is the

love of God for all. Our public affirmation of God's love for all is spoken into being whenever we rekindle the light of hope for others. In situations where the darkness threatens to overcome the light, we can be that light of hope by offering hospitality to those in need; by showing kindness and compassion when people are hurting; by simply being present when no words are necessary; or by speaking out and taking action when others try to extinguish the light.

Those of us who carry the light and share the light may feel angry or frustrated by those people who persistently attempt to snuff it out. But God loves those people just as much as us. And God is infinitely more persistent in reaching out to those who resist receiving and being the light. Perhaps at times we, too, don't remember that we carry a spark of the divine light within us. Perhaps at times, we have pushed the light so far down because of fear, or rejection, or hurt that it seems like the light is no longer there. But God will never allow God's light to be extinguished.

Even after Jesus' first followers received glimpses of God's salvific light in the world, many betrayed, denied and rejected him. But Jesus in all his glory on the cross did not forsake them. Jesus continued to be with them, and continues to be with us, to light the path forward. Whenever anyone tries to extinguish God's light and love in the world, we can testify that that is not possible. We can testify to the light even when it changes from a flame to

smoke. We can be witnesses and bearers of the light by re-creating it through the gifts we have received by God's grace. For the light of Christ is revealed in infinite ways through each one of us. The light of Christ is revealed by the gifts of God through the people of God; the people of God through whom God becomes flesh, and lives among, and reveals God's glory.

+ + +