

Jan. 3, 2021

2nd Christmas/Epiphany Celebration

Ephesians 1:3-14

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight 9 God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

13 In Christ you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

John 1.1-14

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

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

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

The Light in the Darkness

W Asheville PC

Happy New Year!!!

The promises of new beginnings and the forgiveness of our past. Praise God in whom all things are made new!!!

In two days it will be Epiphany. As I have probably mentioned before, Christmas was not always a holy day in the Christian calendar, but in the Eastern Christian churches **January 6** was the date of the earliest ‘Christmas’ celebrations, **but they were known as Epiphany services.** Epiphany was and is a celebration of the coming of the Light of God, Jesus, into a dark world and Epiphany has marked the end of the Christmas season since it was first celebrated centuries ago.

As I looked at the texts for today, I was once again moved by the gospel of John and his unique focus on the meaning of Jesus’ birth. There are several verses that jump out at me. Verses 3 and 4 say, “What has come into being 4 in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people.” Or, verse 9, “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.” Or in verse 14, John says, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Emmanuel!! That is a **miracle** in our world and while the idea that God became flesh moves me in ways that I struggle to describe, the idea that the birth of Christ is the light of God breaking into the world to overcome all darkness almost overwhelms me.

PAUSE

John says in verses 3-5, “What has come into being 4 in Jesus was life, and **the life** was **the light** of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

I believe John summarizes the meaning of Jesus’ life in those 2 ½ verses. Let me see if I can show you what I believe.

“What has come into being in Jesus was life, and **the life** was **the light** of all people.” In all the gospels, the argument is made that **Jesus is God** and that he has been a part of God since time began, but I believe that John’s gospel says this more clearly than the other gospels. “1 In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word (Jesus) was with God, and the Word (Jesus) was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.”

“What has come into being in Jesus was life, and **the life** was the light of all people.” Jesus is the cause of life and **his life** was the light of all people. John reminds us that God is the light of the world and since Jesus is God, he is the light of all people.

Then in verse 5 John reminds us “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

In Genesis we have been told how the earth was part of a dark void and God separated the light and the dark. God, and Jesus since they are One, make the light shine into the darkness. This verse also says the darkness did not overcome the light. Clearly it says the darkness of creation did not overcome the light, and I believe it also says the darkness of evil did not overcome **the life and light** of Jesus as it attempted to do on that black Friday.

There are many metaphors used to describe God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in scripture, but the metaphor of light in the darkness touches my spirit in ways that are hard to describe. Our lives could be described as constant struggles against the darkness that lives all around us.

Children face the darkness of being born into families that do not want them. They are unloved, and learning Jesus loves them may mean all the world to them.

People being physically or spiritually abused by family or people they should be able to trust is a special darkness, but knowing that Jesus is with them even in that darkness may give them strength to survive.

The death of a parent, child, sibling, spouse or other loved ones is another special kind of darkness and only Christ can provide the light that leads us thru those dark days.

The darkness that pandemics, cancer, Alzheimer's, heart attacks, depression, or other crippling diseases can bring into our lives could be devastating without **the Light that is Christ**, and the Church.

As the author of John describes John the Baptist, he tells us "**John was not the light**, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." **We are like John the Baptist**. We are not the light but we come to testify to the light.

This day, at the table of communion, let us remember that the LIGHT that is Jesus has come and because he has come, because he has triumphed over evil and darkness, we need not fear the darkness that lives all around us.

Let us live as children of the LIGHT sharing the news of Jesus with all the world. Amen.