

## Church of the Divine Love

### Sermon Sunday December 27, 2020

Isaiah 61: 10-62:3; Psalm 147; Galatians 3: 23-25; 4: 4-7; John 1: 1-18

#### Dear people of God,

Many people search for a new beginning. When life goes wrong, when we regret our past, we hope for new circumstance. Jesus is the only true way to a new beginning. In fact, the coming of Jesus Christ changed our history whether for better, as we accept Him, or for worse if we reject Him.

John is a witness to the light. We are children of God who are promised new life by Jesus who revealed the Father's love to us. The invitation is to welcome him in a world that does not know him. Even his own people did not accept him. Jesus is God's greatest gift to us. Jesus desires to be at home with us. We pray to have room in our hearts and lives for him.

Today let's look at this wonderful passage from a new point of view and say: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the word was LOVE! That love is creative, the beating heart of the universe. It is a love that brings light to everyone. If I allow it to shine on me, I begin to see everyone from the divine point of view. I see that the potential of each person is to become nothing less than a daughter or son of God! We come to the end of a year and listen to what God's word says to us. It helps us look back to learn and look forward in hope. God's word is a creative word who gives life to all, in love. Jesus is the Word uttered by the Father, the word of hope and promise. Jesus is God's message to us; he is our Good News. We know that God loved the world and sent Jesus among us. He is the only Son who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

It has been an eventful year that leaves lasting memories. We have the fidelity of God to sustain us in the many challenges of life. We need light in the darkness and hope in the uncertainty that is around us. God has given us the Eternal Word and the living word of scripture to guide us. What word does the Lord desire me to take with me as I enter the New Year? As our year draws to a close, today's scripture brings us back to the beginning of all time. As we stand on the threshold of another year, we take time to recall the greatest event of all: God has entered our world, not just for a day's visit, but has made it his permanent dwelling. Lord, let me set aside some time today, to reflect on how the light of your presence has impacted on my life during this past year. Let me be grateful and give thanks for all I have received from you directly and through the gift of other people.

God brought Moses onto the hills of Moab, from where he could see the Promised Land. He said to him, 'The word is extremely near you'. The Word, Jesus, is the Promised Land waiting for us, not tomorrow, not in some faraway time when we will have dispensed with all that now distracts us, but now. God is in residence among us, his address is Planet Earth. The Light of the World has come among us. He is born in the night, with his own star blazing above him. He lies in the dimness of a stable, that same Lord who, as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, led the Israelites to freedom. He has come to bring his people from darkness into light. As we gaze into the manger, at the tiny creature who is given to us as a light to the nations, we can only whisper 'Come, let us adore him'. He lives among us, in our country, our city, our neighborhood. His love and his light radiate everywhere. We are all being changed by this. Christian tradition says that God became human so that human beings might become divine. I beg as the last grace of this year that I may let that wonderful truth sink in.

Today we celebrate the presence of God among us. Slowly and mysteriously, Jesus brings light into the web of human history. Slowly his light overcomes our darkness, so that eventually everyone is enlightened. I see the light coming and it bathes me in its radiance. I give thanks for all of this. Now that Jesus has arrived, I have a whole new meaning to my life. I am becoming a daughter or son of God! I have been adopted into God's own family. I am important to God! I can now feel happy about myself, no matter what difficulties may be in my life. Everyone else is important too, so I ask to have great reverence from now on, for myself and for those around me.

The Fourth Gospel gives us a cosmic perspective: Jesus as the power and intelligence with which God created and sustains the world, existing before time and space. Jesus is the Logos, the word, the source of life, which is the light of all people. As we prepare for the new year ahead, that we will shine out ever more strongly, pushing the darkness ever further back, speaking out for justice and compassion. Because that's what the world wants for Christmas, what the world needs in 2021, a light to light the way through the darkness to the bright glory of life in its fullness.

Abram and Sarai become Abraham and Sarah. Jacob becomes Israel. Jerusalem becomes Zion, who is the bride at this royal wedding. Zion is that place that reminds us that God's promises are kept, and that God's presence is assured. Zion is the place that reaffirms that the kingdom of God is meant for earth as it is in heaven. Zion reminds the people that they are chosen and loved with a love that is everlasting and will endure from one generation to the next, through pandemic and political acrimony. Zion proclaims that the Creator is not far off but still comes to us. In this first Sunday after Christmas, Zion calls us to look toward her light as a beacon that cuts through the uncertainty and anxiety of the night as a homing signal. We too have a hope worthy of both our celebration and our participation. Notably, this passage is not a birth narrative. It's a wedding. The intimate relationship elevated here is not of parent and child, it is of mutual, if unequal partners. God does the work but has chosen to do it through people. We have a role to play in our own redemption and are called to reaffirm a covenant that is not imposed upon us but that we are invited to enter. The good news is that our (not-silent) Partner is with us, shares our burdens, loves us abundantly and will give us rest. Even as we wait in expectation, that is a hope worth celebrating.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the world received that light, and each Christmas we receive it again. It's our joyful task to bear the light into the world and let it shine out, sharing the good news of Christ, the light of the world, who shines still today despite the darkness and who will never be overcome. May the mystical, beautiful, vision of John's Gospel wraps your year in love and joy. **Amen.**