

Christmas Day  
John 1: 1-14  
The Reverend Bonnie Underwood  
December 25, 2017

### Remember

Good Morning and Merry Christmas!

We're blessed here at Holy Spirit to have multiple celebrations of the Feast of the Incarnation. And each one is just a little different, as we try, in our human way, to retell and relive the miracle, the mystery, and the wonder that is the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. God incarnate, God enfleshed, God fully-human and fully-divine.

Last night we read the gospel of Luke and heard the story of Jesus' birth: of Joseph and Mary coming to Bethlehem due to Caesar's census; of Mary giving birth in a stable, a cave; of the host of heavenly angels announcing this miracle; and about the shepherds, who having heard this wondrous message, go to see this child in a manger. Our services try to help us experience — through pageantry, music, and song — the wonder of Jesus' birth in that small town of Bethlehem, so long ago. Together, we have the chance discover Jesus anew, the fully human child and the Son of God, who brings us all that we need: the living gift of God's grace, the promise for the future, and the hope for our salvation.

And this morning, we delve deeper into another aspect of our Lord and Savior, for in John's gospel, we hear nothing about a baby or angels or shepherds or sheep. Instead we are taken back to the beginning, to the time before creation, to the time before time, and we hear that Jesus was there — for in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God and all things came into being through him. The Holy One who brought to being our world and all this is in it, our universe, and all the galaxies and the stars so many light years away from us — our Lord who would see all of creation, and more, as smaller and more insignificant, than a marble that I could hold in my hand. This too, describes Jesus, the fully Divine One, who overflows with love for us.

Two pictures, two distinct images. Jesus who was born on this earth, in a certain time, at a certain place. A poor child of an oppressed people, who stood no chance of success or the good life in the way that society would have defined it. And the Cosmic Jesus, the ruler of the universe, the one who was and is and is to come. Today we celebrate the mystery and wonder of the Incarnate Jesus, who humbled himself to walk with us, giving us the opportunity for new life through acceptance of him, welcoming us as children of God to share in the miracle of new life in him.

John's gospel points us back towards the imagery of the Creation story in Genesis, reminding us that in Jesus, we all share a common identity. Remember, we're not trapped by the divisiveness of our earthly labels or stereotypes. Remember, The Word, through whom all was created, made us all in the image and likeness of God. Remember, all of humanity is beloved by God, for we are all of God.

Jesus, the Word, brings Light — a light that shines in the darkness, a light that cannot be overcome by human division, nor sin, nor the powers and principalities of evil. Remember,

Jesus, the Word, continues in his work of creation, by bringing new life, transformation, healing, and reconciliation, through the gift of his grace, God's love freely given.

We are assured that regardless of what we have faced or will face in our lives, Jesus is with us: reaching out to us,, loving us. God is never finished with us — God does not see us as disposable people, deserving to be tossed aside. We need only to accept Jesus, to say yes to his loving invitation, to accept his love, and begin to recognize just how much we are truly his beloved.

This is the good news! Grace is the essence of the Word of God, and God's love, God's grace is all around us — it's in the very air we breath. And what peace and joy we can find in knowing that in Jesus, we have the hope of both eternal life and the hope of new life today. For God's reign has already begun through Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension and the power of Christ's love changes everything. For it's this power of Love that breaks open our human hearts that can become so pinched and small, allowing us to instead see God's light in all humankind. It's love that can bring light to those dark places which cause us to get stuck in concentrating on our petty differences. It's love that can transforms the hurt and suffering of the world into wholeness.

Jesus invites us into new life, welcoming all through the waters of baptism; renewing and strengthening us as we eat and drink at God's Holy table; and calling us to live our lives as peacemakers, testifying to the Word and sharing the truth of God's love for all God's beloved children — for all of humanity.

The Word became flesh for us, for ALL of us. Share the good news of God's love by carrying Christ's light to all you encounter. Remember, we live into God's call to love one another whenever we welcome the stranger or feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or compassionately care for the sick, the suffering, and the oppressed, when we do all these things for Christ's sake. Amen.