

“Who God Is”

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St. Luke’s Episcopal Church – Anchorage, Kentucky

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Merry Christmas! And yes, it is still Christmas, for the next nine days. Christmas begins with our Christmas Eve vigil, as we usher the light into the world by repeating the sacred story of Jesus’s birth in Bethlehem to a woman named Mary and her husband Joseph. And Christmas ends with the arrival of the Wise Ones from afar, often called the Wise Men or the Magi, with their gifts for the Prince of Peace and their recognition of his power and importance. Our ancestors in the church have spent these twelve days feasting, celebrating, and spending time with family as the sacred story is woven into the fabric of life. This weekend we continue to celebrate Christmas, not only because the news of the incarnation is so joyful, but because we need more time to listen, to hold still, to meet the child again as he meets us. We need more time to find our footing, to breathe in the clear air and be warmed by the glow of Immanuel. So, again, Merry Christmas! It is good for us to be here, to share again in the story of God’s coming among us, to celebrate with our Christian family the ways in which we are all connected by the love of God.

Last night, we were blessed to see our connections deepen and grow as we brought a new member into our family. Three year old Greyson Touma Folske entered this place already part of something bigger than himself, a family of parents and siblings and aunts and uncles and grandparents and friends, all of whom have shaped and will continue to form him as he grows in stature and in spirit. But in the moment of baptism, Greyson’s family grew beyond the reaches of

time and space to encompass every Christian that will ever live, those he will never meet in this life and those who will someday be his dearest friends and loved ones. His entire life will be lit from within by a sacred light, a story of love and salvation that has been imprinted upon his heart and woven into the life of the people who raise him. As Greyson's family we all commit ourselves to this story, and to the ways we play our part in the poetry of God's mysterious love. This mystery unfolds for us endlessly in scripture, and today's Gospel passage is no exception.]

On Christmas Eve we heard about where Jesus was born, where he came from, who his parents were and who was there to greet him. We heard Angels singing about him and watched shepherds go out into the world praising God after meeting him. Now, as we continue the celebration, we learn who Jesus is. Not where he was born or who raised him, but who this child IS. And through him, we learn again and for the first time who God is.

It might feel a bit jarring to move from the beautiful and colorful story of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, from the picturesque shepherds and adorable sheep and glittering angels to the dense poetry that begins John's Gospel. We move from the tangible, physical, the panoramic visual of the shepherds in the fields and the child in the manger to the vast void of the beginning of all things. The physical world around us tells us that a child is born, lights shine and wreaths hang and red and green is draped across our vision in every direction, and yet John invites us, for a moment, to close our eyes. Just for a moment, just for this short time, we are invited to shut out the loud and colorful and beautiful world that bombards our sight, and to listen. Listen to the poetry, to the words that attempt in their own beautiful but limited way to tell the same story that we have been telling since Christmas Eve. The story of who God is, and who we are as the ones made in God's image. The same light of the world, the same good news to all the people sung by the angels, can be found here.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light of all people, the light of the world, the light in the darkness. Is that not the same story, the same miracle that we have been celebrating since Christmas Eve? The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. This world. Our world. John is inviting us to remember that the story does not begin with a manger, but with a loving God, a creative God that chose to make us and then chose to come among us and continues to choose us again and again as we stumble and fall and strive and grow. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. From God's fullness as the creator of the universe, from God's fullness as a newborn child, we have all received, grace upon grace.

We can sometimes lose that, that sense of eternity and awe. The tiny infant about whom angels sing and prophets preach, is the same God that preexists all things and through whom all things are made. That is why this child born in Bethlehem gets a twelve day celebration, why we sing hymns about him and why we pray in his name. Because his tiny fragile hands hold the power to create a new world, because his voice casts out demons and heals sickness and his ears have heard the cries of God's beloved children. This is the paradox, the mystery that John's poetry invites us to revel in. Our God is at once all powerful and all humble, able to speak the stars into being and willing to put himself at our mercy. Our God wants us to know him as deeply as we are known, wants to bring us ever deeper into the life of love. This is why we spend time with God each week, why we listen to the words of scripture and why we celebrate the mystery of God's incarnate word for more than a single night. Because in the incarnate word of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, God speaks from the depth of his heart to us. So let us dwell

in the heart of God for another week. Let us live deeply into the story of who our God is, and who we are because he chose to become like us.