

Christmas Day 3, John 1:1-14, 12/25/22 - Kendall Batten-Kalantzis

What is eternal has been born. In the beginning was God, and today we celebrate God's birth in the Christ child. The incarnation of God in Christ is the most holy of paradoxes: what has always been, is in this moment, new and fresh, tangible and near. What is eternal has been born this day on earth.

The Christmas scripture from John zooms out beyond the manger, the shepherds, and the heavenly hosts. It zooms out beyond the narrative of salvation history, even beyond time itself. At its view from above, John brings into focus a God who is creative, a God who made the world in the beginning, who remakes and renews the world this morning in Christ, and a God who through Christ remakes and renews our lives.

John's language harkens back to the creation story in Genesis. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" from Genesis 1:1 is parallel in John 1:1 with "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Through the concept of the word as logos, Jesus is established as pre-existent, eternal, and as creator with God in the beginning. The God who has been eternally, has chosen to recreate God's very self in Jesus. As J Harold Ellens writes: Jesus as the Word is "the facilitator of God's redemption economy in creation, providence, and salvation." Jesus is God's self-expression.

Of all the ways of God connecting with creation, there is none like "becoming flesh and dwelling among us." No other divine intervention, of which our scriptures are filled with examples, no burning bush, no celestial visitation, could express what is embodied in the life of Christ.

Likewise, as we recall this morning, there is no symbol or language to express the hope, joy, the bewilderment of welcoming a new baby. I think it is significant that God choose an ordinary yet extraordinary human experience as God's point of connection.

When I met my daughter, I was woozy and exhausted in a little mountain hospital room facing a full wall of windows, the snow swirling outside. We were in a snowglobe. I could only marvel at a new life, full of promise and potential, that was until her little face crinkled up and she let out a wail, and I was drawn back into the reality of her complete dependency. In the moment my daughter was born, my world was remade. The pieces rearranged around her.

The birth of Christ is not just at the center of Mary and Joseph's life, but of all people's, of all creation. Time itself was rearranged around the birth of the Christ child.

The love of God, which had always been and always will be, was present in a new way. God was not beyond but among. God was physical and tangible. God met us where we are.

John's passage continues that we are invited to a rebirth - to be born, not of blood or of the will or of the flesh, but of God. What does it mean to you to be "born of God?" (pause) For some this may be a moment, for others a lifelong process. For many of us, both? (For in John, God's time is both particular and expansive.)

What I believe this passage offers us this morning is the promise that whatever has been, and wherever we find ourselves, a new beginning is possible. This day asks of us: where do we need rebirth, freshness, and possibility in our own lives? What in us needs to be reborn of God?

These tender places are where God has come to dwell. These are the places where God in Christ, born this day, says: behold I am making all things new.

This joyful morning, all the limiting conventions of expectations, bad habits, the way it has always been, he/she said, they are all transcended. What has been is shattered and rearranged around the birth of the Christ child. And if in your present circumstances this sounds to you like nothing short of a miracle, then perfect, that is what God is in the business of.

In Christ, God is born to be with us, in the very places we need him most. And in Christ we too, are a new creation. The old has gone, and behold, the new has come.