

Christmas 1

December 29, 2013

Rev Ken Wratten at St Stephen's, San Jose

Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3

Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7

John 1:1-18: The Word was with God, and the Word was God. The true light was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him.

In this time following the Christmas Event, Scripture challenges us to move beyond the peaceful vision of the baby in a manger and shepherds in the field; Past the supernatural occurrences of angels and heavenly hosts singing with joy over the Birth; and Past the arrival of magi from far way lands to observe something spectacular that was happening.

To engage in a deeper experience of Christmas is to ponder the reason and the significance of God choosing to become incarnate, and choosing a manger of all things, a feeding trough for cattle, to make his entrance. The reason for the birth of this Child was for God to take on our flesh and blood. The significance is that God arranged this Birth in order to make a new declaration of His love for us by becoming one of us; by becoming part of his own creation.

The prologue of John's Gospel moves us into an even higher level of theology. We move past only considering the importance of Jesus' birth, to the importance of his entire stay on earth among us.

John said that Jesus is the Word of God

The Word of God moved over the deep at creation.

The Word of God came through angels to Joseph and to Mary: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

The Word of God came through angels to the shepherds: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."

The Word of God spoke when Jesus was baptized: "You are my beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

The Word of God came from the cloud when Jesus was transfigured: "This is my beloved Son. Hear Him!"

When the Word of God was spoken, things happened!

The term used in the original Greek text of the NT is the *Logos* of God. Greek philosophers taught that *Logos* was the principle that

provided integrity to the universe. In early Christian thought, this concept of *Logos* was taken to mean that the Word/breath of God is how God's will is expressed in creation. John wrote that Jesus is the *Logos*; which means that God the Father created all things THROUGH the Son. Jesus' existence did not begin in a manger in Bethlehem. Jesus was the human form of the Son of God who has existed with God the Father from the beginning. Jesus' earthly life was meant to communicate God's will to us. "The Word became flesh and lived among us ... full of grace and truth" (v. 14).

Jesus is the Word of God. John also said that Jesus is the Light of God. John wrote, "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." The Light of God overcame chaos and darkness at creation. The Light of God was coming into the world again. This light is such a Light that the darkness of the world – the world's rejection of Jesus – cannot overcome it.

There is also a sense in this reading of Light coming to us that is knowledge of God, versus the darkness of separation from God, or ignorance of the reality of God. The Light of God, the fuller knowledge of God, means that you and I have an intimate relationship with our God because of Jesus. Listen to this writing on our unity with God through Jesus.

The theologian Symeon (949-1022) wrote, "We awaken in Christ's body as Christ awakens our bodies, and my poor hand is Christ, He enters my foot, and is infinitely me. I move my hand, and wonderfully my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of Him (for God is indivisibly whole, seamless in His Godhood). I move my foot, and at once He appears like a flash of lightning. Do my words seem blasphemous?— Then open your heart to Him and let yourself receive the one who is opening to you so deeply. For if we genuinely love Him, we wake up inside Christ's body where all our body, all over, every most hidden part of it, is realized in joy as Him, and He makes us, utterly real, and everything that is hurt, everything that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful, maimed, ugly, irreparably damaged, is in Him transformed and recognized as whole, as lovely, and radiant in His light; he awakens as the Beloved in every last part of our body."

The OT tells about God dwelling in the wilderness tabernacle. Later, God would dwell in the Temple in Jerusalem. But at the Christmas event, the Son of God came to live with us, and now lives within us, through his HS. And so our theology, our thinking about God, is expanded past the Birth filled with images predicted by generations of prophets; and even past the humbling thought that God has taken the incredible step to come and live among us in human form. The Apostle John wants us to recognize the grace and truth which God chooses to bestow on each of us; that through the Christmas Event we have become witnesses and recipients of God's creative Word, and of God's grace-filled Light.

By the Word of Jesus we have been invited to know the mind of God. And by the Light of Jesus we can see and know God.

Matthew and Luke give us the story of Jesus' birth with images of a manger, shepherds, wise men, and a travelling star; John skipped all that. John began his description of Good News with the fact that Jesus' birth is about God wanting so deeply to express his will to us, and to make himself known to us, in a way than had ever been experienced in human history.

As our Christmas season continues on until January 6th, and the presents are now all unwrapped, I pray that you and I turn our lives to unwrapping this most amazing gift from God that is Word and Light. Amen.