

SERMON CHRISTMAS DAY

John 1:1-14 | December 25, 2022 | The Rev. Barnabas Pusnur

Christ has come! Life and light has come. A merry Christmas to all of you!

Out of all the ways one could have told the story of the birth of Jesus, the gospel according to John is the most unique. This gospel doesn't have any account of the usual story or characters. No mention of Joseph, Mary, or Jesus being born in a manger. No donkey, no shepherds and no wise men from the East. How do you tell the Christmas story without any of its usual characters and story line

John, the writer of this fourth gospel, instead loves to use images and symbols to tell the story of Jesus' birth. John's majestic opening lines, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." is how John begins to tell the story of Jesus coming into the world.

I have yet to see if anyone has dared to write a Christmas pageant based on the Gospel according to John. It would likely be the most difficult enacting of the Christmas story.

But John's telling of the story of Christ's coming is not less significant. It is deep, rich, and beautiful. First John needs to set the stage for Christ's birth. And for that the world must be in existence. That's the stage where all this will happen. But that world itself was made by Christ. John says, "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." Everything that was, and is, and even will be, exists, because it came into being in and through Jesus. This Christmas, when we celebrate Christ, we celebrate the reason why there is something and not nothing.

For John, Christ is the reason the world was, we are, and the world will be. Our existence, the existence of our ancestors, the existence of future generations all come into being because of Christ.

But what is the significance of coming into being through Christ? For one thing it means we are not apart from Christ. We are Christ's very own. We belong to Christ. I belong to him, you belong to him. All creation is Christ's very own. Even if we end up not belonging to anyone else, we belong to Christ. No matter how far or close we have felt from our maker, how connected or distant we have felt, this Christmas morning the Gospel says that the plain fact is that we are, because Christ brought us forth, and we therefore belong to Christ.

And now that the stage is set, John turns on the lights. Christmas is the celebration of the coming of the Creator to be among his creation. John describes Christ's birth in these phrases: "He was in the world"; "He came to what was his own"; and "The Word became flesh." But there's one more image that he keeps repeating. He refers to Jesus' coming and the coming of light. He says "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

Last week, some of the staff at the church: Mark, Catherine, and I, were replacing all the lights here in the sanctuary. Getting up on a lift that we rented out, we went all the way up to the ceiling to replace all the lights. As the new lights shined, we could see how the sanctuary came alive especially during the evening.

Talking about Christ's coming John writes, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." John alludes to a cosmic conflict between light and darkness. This is not a physical darkness, an

absence of sunlight, which in fact we need to take rest and be part of the rhythm of nature. John's darkness is symbolic, a metaphor for the absence of Christ, the absence of life, the absence of flourishing. In Christ's light, flourishing is possible. The negative forces of the world, the evil within us and around us, will not overcome the light of Christ. Christ's light will ultimately sustain and lead to the wholeness of all. This light teaches us how to live. It shows us the way of flourishing. It shows us the way because the light shines.

This light shines not only out there but is now within us. John says that this light enlightens us. We carry the light of Christ. We shine too. We work towards preparing and walking in the way of flourishing of all. Together we are God's light in the world.

So that's how the Christmas story of John goes. Creation and coming as light. But that's not it. John's telling of the Christmas story has one more element that makes it even more unique. Imagine that in the Christmas pageant based on John's gospel there are two babies instead of one! Yes, John weaves another birth into his

Christmas story. It's the story of our spiritual birth. He says to all who gladly receive this creator Christ and to all place their trust in him, to them, he says, Christ gives power to become children of God. Children who are born not according to the physical human nature but are born of God. Not mere physical existence but being born as a child of God.

So then on Christmas we realize that it's not only about the birth of Christ, but about our own birth as God's children. We belong to God not only as God's creation, but as God's own child. God is the father and mother of us all.

That is the Christmas story for John. A story of life and light. Of our savior's birth and our birth as God's own child. Of belonging to Christ and of shining our light in the world.

My dear fellow believers may this Christmas season, the next twelve days of Christmas be a celebration of Christ, who is our life and light. May joy and flourishing come to all people. Merry Christmas!