

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church      Pinole, CA

Christmas Day      December 25, 2020

“Let there be light”

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Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas. What a year, and what a difference a year makes. You may be remembering past Christmases and thinking, “I don’t like this year”, or as I have heard a lot, “I just wish Christmas was over so I could feel better and get back to planning my future.” But this Christmas is indeed different, and maybe rightly so. We are reminded this Christmas that the story of God is not necessarily about us. The story of God is about how God moves and interacts within His own creation. And we are part of that creation.

If you have been following the compline services on Wednesday throughout Advent, at one point you may have wondered, “why did she read Genesis during Advent?” So here is the answer, and why it is important.

In Genesis 1 it states, “And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.” Notice the words here, “let there be.” Not an authoritative “Be there light” or “I make light” or “Light I command you to come into being.” Just a kind, gentle, very inclusive statement “let there be.” Commanding, but in a way that seems to be cooperative.

I believe this is how God works in the world, and yet, the people around during the time of Jesus (and still today) have this impression that God is commanding and demanding. And they may argue that the statement “let there be” was done with fierce determination.

But then there is Jesus, the Nativity, Christmas, God as infant, mortal in body, susceptible to death.

Yes, the angel came to Mary, but nothing happened until she agreed. She was not forced or coerced into being part of the story of God working in the world.

In Luke we have Mary answering, “ ‘I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.’ Then the angel left her.” And yes, the angel could have presented the situation in a forceful way, but I doubt it. We don’t hear of Mary cowering or hiding. We hear the words “do not be afraid,” as the angel describes God’s plans for her. Again, the kind of words, words that describe God’s plan just like “let there be.”

The child, Jesus, grew to be a man. But not the warrior Messiah everyone was expecting; rather a man who told those in power that even the littlest, the poorest, the different ones, even those not recognized by their own faith tradition had worth in the eyes of God. Again, not the forceful demanding recognition of power, but the image of the shepherd, strong enough to defend his flock, but gracious enough to love, forgive, and search for those who go astray.

This is the story of Christmas. This is the gift at the end of the expectant Advent wait. “Let there be light.” Let there be a child: innocent, full of promise, full of future. A child, fragile, and among his own people, hunted for what he represented. God, again working in the world inclusively, gently, and in a way that brings light rather than darkness.

God’s work did not end on that first Christmas, at that first Nativity scene. He continues to work, and we are called to work with him. Even this very day, wherever this finds you. Even if you are sitting in front of your phone, angry that you are alone, grieving that you

are lonely, thinking of a way you can safely celebrate this holiday. If you are watching this during a break at work, right now this morning, or before you go to bed, God is working in your life. He is and has, and always will be. He created you with just a word - "let there be." He loves you.

The light does shine in the darkness; the darkness will not overcome it. "Let there be" a gentle joy this holiday. "Let there be" a way to connect with those you love that is safe. "Let there be" a way to feel love in your life through connecting to nature. "Let there be" whatever comes next.

This year is a tough one, and yes, you may say God is letting all this happen. But as we see, God has an over-arching plan, one that we have only a glimpse at, wrapped in our own time and space. God is creating a future, he is shining light, and just as the Holy Family stood in awe of their own participation in God's plan – and not all of it easy or pleasant, God is creating his work in you – and not all of it will be easy or pleasant.

You don't have to be happy today, you don't have to do anything special, except for one moment. This moment, right now, breathe. Breathe. Breathe and know that the darkness did not and cannot overcome the light. Recognize that "the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

God is working in the world. God's creating has and can be gentle, maybe the reason we try to listen to that "small still voice." God the Father, Jesus the Son, gently come this morning, and then on the other hand the Holy Spirit, well that's another sermon!

Merry Christmas, and God be with you. Amen!