

## ***The Revelation of God***

John 1:1-14

December 25, 2006

### **I.**

Merry Christmas! Well, we have celebrated Jesus' birth and Christmas is just about over, or is it? Today's Gospel might suggest that Christmas is never over because that miraculous birth has forever linked us to God's promise of a great new day. Today's reading tells us that through Jesus Christ, God came to us so that we might come to him, which is a gift that never stops giving.

This reminds me of the story of the fellow who visited his friend, who was a music teacher. The fellow walked in his friend's office, and in a somewhat offhand way said, "So, professor, what's the good news for today."

The music teacher did not say a word. Instead he picked up a tuning fork, struck it with a mallet, and produced a tone. Then the teacher said, "The good news is that was middle C, it was middle C yesterday, it will be middle C tomorrow and next year, and in fact it will be middle C forever. And that's the good news."

### **II.**

The same kind of good news is in the reading from John this morning. It was the good news yesterday, and will be so tomorrow, next year, and forever.

Let me read just the first three verses again, along with verse fourteen. "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. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory."

What a lyrical and mystical statement! At first glance it might be easy to dismiss this passage as philosophical and abstract. You might think that it is not likely to really speak to us as some parts of the Bible do.

I would like to suggest just the opposite. John's Gospel tells about the greatest drama ever to happen—God coming to earth. And John's version is not the usual Christmas story with which we all are familiar, it also adds meaning and significance to that Christmas story because John explains exactly who that baby in the manger was.

The Christmas story tells us that Jesus was born of Mary to be the savior of the world. And the Christmas story also treats that little baby in the manger as fully human. He had all the same characteristics as any other baby.

John's Gospel takes this further and proclaims that this fully human baby also was fully God because he was incarnate from the Word as the earthly expression of God. In short, Jesus was the way in which God actually revealed himself and his character to us.

### **III.**

And the concept of revelation, and the response of humanity to that revelation, is at the heart of John's Gospel. Jesus Christ came to us to bring us to him. In Christ we meet God as God wants us to see him. When we look at Jesus we see that his entire ministry was characterized by his love for humanity and by his efforts to redeem sinners, both in his life and in his death. To see this in Jesus is to see it in God.

Jesus brought us face to face with God, not in some cosmic and eternal sense, even though the Word is cosmic and eternal, but rather in the divine love that was expressed so fully by the incarnation.

That aspect of Jesus and his revelation of God is a central part of the Gospel reading for today. It describes Jesus in this way: "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

What is the purpose of a light? Normally we don't have lights just so we can sit and look at the lights. Our Christmas trees might be an exception. But typically we have lights to illuminate the things around us. We have lights so that we can see other things more clearly.

Jesus was the light in two ways. He was both the divine light and the worldly light. As the divine light that revealed God more clearly. In this way he showed us who God is, how God thinks, how God feels, and how God loves us. Jesus could do this because he was divine himself.

But as the worldly light he shined in the other direction. He represented us to God. Through his life here God could experience how we think, how we feel; and how we long for love. Jesus could do this because he was human and knew us intimately.

John also tells us that the Prince of Peace was born into a time and age that also was home to the Prince of Darkness, and yet the darkness was not able to overcome him. This earthly conflict between good and evil is clearly set forth in today's reading: "he was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him."

Aren't those just about the most tragic and sad words in the Bible? God himself came to earth to reveal himself in love to his people, and they turned their backs on him.

But John also offers hope, for those tragic and sad words of rejection are immediately followed by words of salvation. John proclaims that "to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God."

That applies to us. We are given the opportunity, through Christ's revelation of God, to share in the heavenly kingdom that is God's promise to those who believe. But faith does not impose itself. It exists among alternatives from which we can choose. God came to offer a relationship, but he makes it our choice.

#### **IV.**

Christmas is not really over; it never is. Christmas is God's promise of a great new day. John tells us that light and truth win out, and that the darkness cannot prevail. But this is a message we must hear with the ears of faith. God wants us to believe in him the way that he believes in us, because he came to us so that we might come to him. *Amen.*