

Christmas Year B
December 25, 2017
John 1:1-14

*O holy Wisdom: Fill us this day with joy, understanding and grace,
that we may tell out the wonder of your love; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Merry Christmas!

I'd like to begin by reading you a poem called *First Coming* by Madeleine L'Engle. This poem encapsulates what this day means, this Christmas morning as we awaken to a changed world into which Christ the Word has arrived in flesh, in carne, incarnate.

First Coming

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace
He came when the Heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He died with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait

till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
He came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

(From The Ordering of Love: The New and Collected Poems of Madeleine L'Engle)

Each year, each Christmas we hear the same story –
the miraculous story of a child being born in Bethlehem –
the child who was and is so much more – for he is Jesus.
He is the Prince of Peace. He is the newborn King.
He is the Son of God – the incarnate deity.

A couple years ago, as my 5-year-old daughter and I were sitting in Seattle traffic,
she said loudly from the backseat,
“Cookies are NOT as exciting as Jesus!”

“Really?” I asked. Genuinely surprised to hear her say this,
as she has always really liked cookies. “Why do you say that?”
“Well,” Avery answered, with a short sigh,
“he is the newborn king. What else is there to say?”

And indeed, she is correct.

He is the newborn king and how could cookies be more exciting than that.

I found a little inspiration this year from other sources, not just my young child,
from poet Madeleine L’Engle and another seasoned theologian –
our former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.
In reflecting on the hymn “O Come All Ye Faithful,” which we will sing a little later,
Lord Williams speaks of Jesus as the king of angels.

The incarnation, that is the birth of Jesus – God in flesh –
is God’s life boiling over from eternity into time, he says.
Light just pours out from God and yet God remains undiminished.
That is part of the miracle – God as the Light that would not go out.

God has always bestowed and given.

It is another way of talking about the outflowing and boiling over
that God continually does
in which we experience how God holds nothing back.

God gives and gives and gives all the while remaining unchanged,
un-diminished, never depleted – and at the same time,
the result for human life becomes unrecognizable
from what it once was.

We are forever changed by and through Jesus.
He did not wait until we were ready.
He has been there/He has been here all along.

There is no beginning, that is what John’s gospel tells us
because since the dawn of creation and before
existed the Word alongside God and that is Jesus.

An *incredible* poet penned these words,

*“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God
and the Word was God
and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”*

But an even more amazing *creator* brought these things into being,
breathed life into creation and caused this world to spin on its axis.
Our God and creator brought about Jesus, the Logos, the Word.

Jesus, the way in which God truly and amazingly makes the difference
is by living humanly – in the person of Jesus.

Because Jesus is no superman – he weeps, he is tempted,

“his will wobbles” to quote Lord Williams,
and he even displays hints of uncertainty at times and yet...
Jesus is the embodiment of God
and through him God redefines the capacities of human life.
God changes the world by establishing human relationships
through the person of Jesus.
You see, Jesus entrusts himself to unreliable people – people like you and me.
And this is what is truly compelling and miraculous about this whole enterprise
(pause) God changes things by letting go.

The reason Jesus is more exciting than cookies –
the miracle we continue to celebrate year in and year out
is the way in which God’s life overflows and fully inhabits our humanity
in a way of immense risk taking and letting go –
and that is a beautiful thing.

Christmas is about hearing the good news and then sharing what we have heard,
which is why we are so eager to sing about it this day.

“O Come All Ye Faithful” is about gathering the joyful,
coming together to witness Jesus,
one born from God’s boiling over from eternity into time. –
not when all was peaceful,
not when the stars were aligned and we were ready.

Rather, God sent Jesus the Word into that stable in Bethlehem
so many years ago **because the world needed it.**
Christ came in JOY.

He came with LOVE.

He dove right in to our imperfect world filled with shame, sin, doubt, and scorn.
And Jesus came to heal, to share our grief, to touch our pain.

Christ came in JOY.

He came with LOVE.

Rejoice! Rejoice!