

Mt Carmel UMC

December 29, 2024

First Sunday of Christmas

“No Shepherds, No Angels, No Star” - John 1:1-14- Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

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. What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 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 own¹ and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And 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. (John 1:1-14 NRSV)

The Rev. King Duncan shared a powerful insight when he said about the beginning of the Gospel of John, here there were no shepherds, no angels, no star - yet here ultimately is the story of Christmas. This story says, first of all, that Christmas is not an act of humanity, but of God. *“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.”* When we could do nothing for ourselves, God stepped in to save us.

Bob Considine told of the time he accompanied an infant Vietnamese orphan to the U.S. so she could be adopted after the Vietnam War. On the long flight to the U.S. the baby's eyes overflowed with tears, but she made absolutely no sound. Bob found a stewardess and asked her what the problem was. The stewardess had seen war orphans before and told him that this was normal. She said, “the reason they don't make noise when they cry is because they learned a long time ago that nobody will come.” What a sad story. A child quits crying when she learns that no one will come. It could be our story. But it is not our story because God did come – as a babe in the manger. Christmas is not an act of humanity, but of God.

God acted in the only way God could act without overwhelming us and taking away our freedom. God became a tiny babe. Christmas is an act of God. God gave us what we most needed. God told us who we are. *“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 own¹ and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.”* That's who we have become, who we are - children of God. When we know that, the meaning and purpose of life changes. You are a beloved child of God. Have a beloved Christmas! Alleluia and Amen.

Of All the Carols We Have Heard

Jeffrey B. Childs 12/19/2024

Of all the carols we have heard,
This one tells us of God's Word.
There are neither shepherds nor sheep,
But a promise God does keep.

In the beginning with one ray,
The first light was called "Day."
And once again it all begins,
As this story opens.

Into the darkness there comes light,
By the child born that night.
The Word becomes flesh among us,
Our Lord and savior Jesus.

For this we give our thanks and praise,
To the Lord all our days.
For Christmas has made all things new.
We know that the Word is true.