

Christmas 1

December 29, 2019

Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Psalm 147:13-21

Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7 We are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir.

John 1:1-18 John's prologue.

I hope you had a fabulous day last Wednesday. I hope you were able to share time with people you love; maybe to have a special meal together; and maybe to get a gift or two from people who want to be sure you know that you are loved. I think that is the very important point to sharing gifts. It's nice to get a new calendar from my insurance agent, but that really misses the point to the purpose of the gifts at Christmas.

The prologue to John's Gospel is a short course in high theology. In it John is talking about the ultimate gift that is packaged in the human baby Jesus. John skips right over the manger, angelic choirs, and shepherds in the fields. What he celebrates is the Incarnation – the enfleshing of God in the man Jesus Christ. The question that John wants to address is – why would God decide to become incarnate? Why would the Divine power who created everything, who keeps creation going, who continues to create, have any interest in setting his divinity aside to become one of us? Why take on the frailties, failings, emotions, and limitations of humanity?

John calls Jesus the Word: in Greek, the Logos. That word Logos was very well known in Jewish and Greek philosophy in John's time. The term came into use in Greek philosophy by Heraclitus of Ephesus around 500 BC. He noticed the patterns and movements in the universe that seem to be interconnected and flowing. He wrote that all things come to pass in accordance with a Logos. Stoics and Platonists picked up this idea of a Logos, as the 'mind of God' being reflected in the intelligence, rationality, order, and harmony of the universe.

John lived among Jews and Greeks. He knew the concept of the Logos, and took it to a whole new level. He wrote that the Logos became flesh in Jesus. The Logos is not just a concept that describes the observed universe, but the Logos is a Divine Being: the Logos is God the Son.

Through the human being Jesus, God chose to enter into human history, taking on flesh in order to give us a way to experience God's true nature. In John 14:9 Jesus says that whoever has seen him has seen the Father. Another way to say this is that Jesus embodies the Logos. He is one with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit. This shared purpose, love, and unity of the

Godhead describes the Trinity. Each part of the Trinity has its own character, but always acts with a united purpose.

[Richard J. Vincent wrote: “This relationship of mutual life and love – this eternal giving, receiving, and sharing of self – is the Dance of Eternity. This Dance is the eternal movement of Father to Son, Son to Father, and Son and Father to Spirit. This fullness of life, love, joy, and communion was complete, needing nothing or no one to fill any deficiency. It is from the fullness of this Dance that God created everything...

“Let’s make certain we understand this: God did not create us in order to love, but out of the abounding fullness of love between Father, Son and Spirit, God created us to share in this love. In short, God created us to share in the Eternal Dance of Father, Son, and Spirit.” (end of quote)]

Today’s reading from Isaiah describes the deep love that God holds for His people. Galatians tells us that we are adopted by God, not as subjects, but as His children. John describes that God’s plan has always been to share this divine love by becoming flesh – incarnate – so that we can follow what we learn; and by doing that, we can share in the love that God has for His creation. God became human, so we could become more like God.

Christmas celebrates that our faith is not a theory or a philosophy about how things work. Our faith is about having a relationship with the Divine power who did it all, and continues to do it all, and whose intention and goal is for us to experience life, love, joy and communion with God.

As I said in my opening comment, Christmas is about getting a gift from somebody who wants to be sure that we know that we are loved. The gift that was given at Christmas is Jesus, the Logos, who invites us to be in spiritual oneness with God.

[As a child I kept my favorite gifts in my dresser drawer. I didn’t want to lose them or break them or wear them out. My mom asked where was the gift she gave me. I told her. When I answered her, she rolled her eyes at me. She wanted me to open and use the gift. I am better at that now. Be sure that you open the gift that God has given you...]

Be sure to open the gift!

Merry Christmas!