

Holy Trinity Sunningdale
Sunday February 7, 2021
Reading – John 1:1-14 – Word Becomes Flesh

Today is the 2nd Sunday before Lent, how strange that our reading is the Christmas Gospel? That we are reading the story of Christmas when we thought Christmas was long over, I can tell you, is not the fault of Rev. Terry or Rev. Jon. John 1:1-14 is the lectionary reading for today and maybe we are being reminded that the story of Jesus is not just for Christmas. But what you can blame Rev. Terry and Rev. Jon for is putting me on the rota to tell the story of Christmas twice in about one month ☺

I stand with the writers of the lectionary on the fact that the story of Jesus is not only for Christmas. And John's gospel seems to agree with me! John begins, not at the baptism of Jesus, not with his conception and birth as Mark, Matthew and Luke. There is no angel, no shepherds, no wise men! John tells the story of Christmas on the grandest scale possible as cosmic history, from the dawn of creation to the realisation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Christmas story is eternal. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There is a Word, a logos, a logic, a grammar, which is not only with God but is God. He was present with God in the beginning (vv.1-2). He was God's agent in creation (v.3) and was the uncomprehended source of life that was light for humankind (vv.4-5).

We usually think of revelation as the penetration of the old by something absolutely new. John would have us see revelation differently. Revelation, for John, is a matter of lifting the hood on the car of creation and allowing you to see the engine that drives it. Revelation is not an event which happened once in an obscure Mediterranean colony in the reign of a local king named Herod and the governorship of a bureaucrat named Pilate. John's account of Jesus made sure that we and other generations are not forgotten. John makes the story of Jesus about Christians of every time and place with the words, "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become children of God (V.12)."

Years ago, an international conference was held of religious leaders where a debate began about what set Christianity apart from other religions. Some argued that it was God coming in the flesh. They decided that wasn't it, because other religions claimed that their gods came in human form. Some argued that it was love, or sacrifice, or the resurrection, or one thing or another; each idea was shot down. Finally, C. S. Lewis, having arrived late, walked into the conference and asked what the noise was about. When told they were discussing what set Christianity apart from all other religions, he said, "That's easy. It's grace."

V. 14 – "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's gospel speaks of Jesus as the "enfleshing" of the Word of God. When we follow Jesus as the concrete expression of the thoughts of God, we become the daughters and sons of God who like Jesus are agents of liberation for the prisoners of sin, poverty and oppression of our own time. To follow Christ is to share and participate in the being and role of Christ.

This is the point where the Christmas story becomes a challenge for you and I because it is our calling to be active children of God and the representatives of the Son of God. Where or how is Christ seen in me and in you? If Christ is seen in me and you, it will be in our engagement in His tasks, the stable becomes where we live and work and the shepherds are our friends and neighbours.

Imagine people asking John, "Tell us John, what stood out to you about the time you spent with Jesus? What stood out to you about Jesus? His answer will surely be, "We observed His glory, the glory of the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

If I am or you are asked the same question, "What stood out from the time we have spent with Jesus? Did we notice and imbibe His grace and truth? Is that grace and truth seen in us?

I ask again, how is Christ seen in me? How is Christ seen in you?

The words of an old song says it all.
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me
All his passion, compassion and purity
O thou Spirit divine
All my nature refine
Till the beauty of Jesus is seen in me!

May this be our daily prayer. Amen.

Dolapo Ogunbawo