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In the Beginning – Reflections on John 1:1-18

The lectionary reading appointed for this first Sunday of 2021 is the beautiful, poetic prologue to the Gospel of John (John 1:1-18). The eighteen verses of this passage of scripture are a veritable treasure house and a preacher could find material for eighteen sermons in it. Nowhere are the most profound mysteries of the Christian faith expressed more deeply and yet more simply than here in this passage. In its broad sweep, we capture the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the doctrine of the person of Christ, his dual nature; the work of Christ, by which we are saved – all caught and captured briefly and succinctly in the simplest of language, but at the same time unable to be fully plumbed in their depth.

This passage is perfect for the Christmas season for we find here the astonishing, amazing and truly wonderful truth of what really happened on Christmas Day: the eternal God, Creator of all things came in flesh to be our Saviour. There is nothing that could be more profound and mysterious than this. It defies all comprehension and human understanding. And yet it is so plainly stated. The greatest Christmas present in the world, presented to us in the simplest of wrapping.

In one simple sentence at the very start, we are given the mystery of the Trinity: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. “In the beginning” echoes the opening of the book of Genesis “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”. Something of major importance is happening here and John is going to tell us about it. He is going to reveal a mystery.

And that mystery that John reveals to us is the divinity of Christ. All well and good, we might say. What good does that do us? What difference does that make to our lives? The short answer is – everything. Because of what the divine Christ has within him and what he brings to us.

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”. This is the light that is essential to us, and which, apart from Christ, we do not have. In the absence of this light, we are dead and in darkness. Dead men walking in the darkness of our own sin. It is the light and life of Christ that pierces the darkness and lights our way. It is Christ who breathes life into us, for he is the source of life.

And then we reach what is probably the most profound sentence ever written: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”. Here is the mystery of Christmas, expressed in the greatest words human ears will ever hear. “And the Word became flesh”. The Son of God became the son of Mary.

The Creator of the universe, born as the child of a woman. The One whom infinite galaxies could not contain is laid in a cattle stall in a stable. How is this possible? With God, all things are possible.

This is the mystery of Christmas, that the little baby laid in a cattle stall is the Son of God and the saviour of the world. God works mysteriously, doing great things in lowly ways. The Everlasting and Eternal God, lying in a manger. A King, dying on a cross. New birth for man given through water and the word. A holy body and blood broken and spilt for forgiveness, now symbolised by bread and wine. This is the mystery of God's dealing with man for his salvation.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. Christ came to walk among God's people. It will forever be a source of wonder to us that the Son of God came to be born as one of us, so that he could die for us. Jesus died as our perfect substitute, taking upon himself the punishment that we as sinners deserved. And because He is the Son of God, his death has infinite worth, his blood covers the sins of the whole world. Christ came at Christmas so that we could be redeemed through His death on a cross on Good Friday, and led out of death into life at Easter.

There are profound implications to this. It changes how we see ourselves and each other. It changes the way we live, our actions and our words. Christmas is not simply an event. It is a life to be lived. It is a way of being. Have you recognised the Word become flesh in your own life? Are you recognising the Word become flesh in the lives of others?

“Full of grace and truth”. That is how Jesus Christ came among us. In the lowly coming of the Christ child are God's gifts of life and salvation in all their fullness, given to man at Christmas. These are not ordinary Christmas presents that are done with in days and then put aside. These gifts will take a lifetime to open and enjoy.

Erwin Tadiar

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled!
Joyful, all ye nations, rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim
Christ is born in Bethlehem!

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King!

Christ, by highest heaven adored
Christ, the everlasting Lord
Late in time behold him come
Offspring of the Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel!



Recordings of Services at
The Parish Church of St
Peter & St Paul at Kimpton
are available on the website:
www.kimptonchurch.co.uk

