

St. Marks Episcopal Church – December 29, 2024

Christmas 1 C – Track 2

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Gospel: John 1:1-18

Jesus is the Light

Just four days ago Jesus was born into our world as the baby of Mary and Joseph. But in the first verse of John's gospel we learn that He has been with us from the beginning of all time. John begins at the very start of our time. Before creation itself. He calls Jesus the "Word" which in Greek represents wisdom, reason and order. We are shown that Jesus is not just a prophet or teacher. He is far more than an historical figure. He is the very Word of God. Eternal, divine and active in the very creation of our world. He is the very foundation of everything that exists. He is the light that overcomes darkness.

When we look at all of the cute manger scenes that we see in many places, and probably even our own homes, we see a cute baby in a soft manger surrounded by loving family, cute animals and foreigners bearing gifts. We do not see the reality of a baby lying in straw in a barn, nor smell the manure or stench of the animals all around. We do not feel or see the darkness caused by the stress of travel and fear of oppression caused by politics and poverty. We do not see the darkness caused by sin, oppression and suffering. But it is this very darkness that Jesus came to overcome. John writes, "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 overcome it".

Even today there is still much darkness in the world. The war in the Ukraine continues as does the strife caused by the attacks on Israel in the middle east. There are terrorists that want to harm all people not like them. There are dictators that oppress their people and others filled with hate. There are many causes for the darkness, even in our country. I expect there are some that feel darkness has been thrust upon them as a result of our recent elections. I can't say that I understand the despair felt by many today, but I would like to be able to show them the light of Jesus. How can we do this? What can we do to help them see the light of Jesus? What can we do to reflect the light of Jesus on all who need it in order to overcome their darkness?

As Christians we are called to embody the freedom, joy and ecstasy of life in Christ. We are called to share our confidence that his goodness, mercy and love are still at work. We are called to tell all that the light still shines in the darkness and that it has not been overcome. We are called to reflect his light by sharing our faith with others.

This is the world we have inherited. It is here that we are to live our lives as witnesses to God and Jesus and to Their saving power. The Gospel is the word of God for all of us trying to live our lives faithfully. It is for us and all those that have been battered and bruised by life. It is for all who are tired and yet hang onto faith. Do not get caught up in the darkness of the world. Let the light shine through your life and well being. Help Jesus light up the darkness.

This Gospel of John does not contain a nativity story. It has no animals, no shepherds, no wisemen, and no angels. He tells the nativity story in just nine words, "And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us." It is not a story as in Matthew and Luke. But what Matthew, Luke and John all tell us about the birth of Christ is that with His birth, a new light begins to shine. And by that light we can begin to see. With that light we can help take away the gloom. In that light we see that hope never needs to be abandoned.

If you know someone that is struggling in the darkness, reach out to them and help them see the light that is Jesus. He is the light that will help cast out their darkness.

As we leave today, may we carry this light into our lives and let it shine in a world that needs grace and truth. And, may we, like John the Baptist, be faithful witnesses guiding others to the glory of God and the word made flesh in the body of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, you have come into our world to banish the darkness from our lives. Help us to remove the scales from our eyes and see the light that you have brought. Help us to help those in need of your light, to see the truth and brightness that you bring to us. In your name we pray. Amen.