

THE WHOLE STORY
The Rev. Mark D. Wilkinson, Rector
St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Christmas Morning 2016
John 1:1-14

Last night we celebrated the birth of the baby Jesus. Today we celebrate the Cosmic Christ of John. This is why the gospel for today is the Prologue from the Gospel of John. For in reality no Christmas is complete without both Jesus and the Cosmic Christ. They are inextricably linked and we cannot comprehend one without the other for they are two sides of the same coin.

Wednesday afternoon as I was working on this sermon, I took 20 minutes to go to the Nave and practice for my Christmas Eve's storytelling. When I came back the late afternoon sun was coming through the window and I took this picture.



For me this image captures perfectly what the Christmas services are about both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. You see we miss half the message when we do not do a service on Christmas Day. Here we have the holy family which is an olivewood carving from Bethlehem standing next to a lighted candle which as I look at it stands in as the Christmas Candle. That symbolizes the light that comes into the world. This is the light that is referenced in our gospel today.

What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Jesus is that light and in a world filled with darkness this light is hope.

The problem is that most walk away from Christmas this year or any year with thoughts of the cute little baby so helpless and small. Christ, the Word is so much more than this, but the baby is an image we can wrap our brains around. The challenge on Christmas as with Advent is we have been looking at both the birth of Jesus and the coming, not the in-breaking of the kingdom. We heard last night as I told the full story from Luke and this is why I did it, the words of prophesy about both John the Baptist and the one for whom he was preparing the way.

And that is the Jesus in this morning's gospel. The savior, the Messiah, the Lord as Gabriel proclaims in his message to the Virgin Mary. He is both the baby and he is the light.

The Synoptic Gospels are all about the human Christ. John is much more concerned with the eternal Christ, the cosmic Christ. John's Jesus is not nearly as human as the other gospels. He clearly knows who he is from the start and is clearly on a mission as the Son of God. The Jesus in John does signs, not miracles in John's language. His gospel is filled with the circular talk I am in the Father and the Father is in me and because you are in me and I am in him etc. that makes most of our heads spin. That is because John is trying to describe with words something that can really only be experienced.

The Prologue to John is one of those places where we go for much of our theology of the trinity something many of us struggle with. The Men's Spirituality Group has been examining the Trinity and this circle of love that Jesus brings up so frequently in the gospel of John.

First of all let's start with concept that Jesus was not God's plan B because we had sinned in the Garden. Jesus took on human nature (this is more than simply saying he became flesh) not to change God's mind about us and prevent him sending us all to hell, but to change our minds about God. To open our minds to the fact that the kingdom is close and to be honest has always been close. We just have never done a very good job of recognizing it.

In the video series Richard points out that God is love, an unending circle of love and for that love to be expressed God must be three. God is in everything in creation. This is at the heart of Celtic Christianity. God is present in every rock, tree, river and plant as well as in all of us.



One video of Richard Rohr we watched used the famous Rubelov icon of the Trinity to help us get a grip on what John is saying. This famous icon has the Father on the left, the son pointing to or blessing the cup in the middle and the Holy Spirit on the right who looks to be pointing down to a square on the front of the table.

What is key in this icon is that small rectangle under the cup. In recent years they have discovered what has been identified as dried glue. You see there was a mirror attached to this icon. So as you look at it you would see yourself as a fourth person in this icon. This is the invitation from the Trinity for us to join in

the Divine Dance. The dance that Jesus, the human Jesus came to invite us to enter. Now there is a lot more symbolism and far too heavy a teaching for this group gathered this morning. However as you leave the manger, the church this Christmas morning consider that the baby who is also the light has a place at his table for you to come and join in this divine dance of love. So may you dance your way out of this service and into the world, knowing that you are part of that light that the darkness cannot overcome. For you see if we go back to the first picture you will see that in the background is my walking stick. For this is a message that is too wonderful to be kept inside the church. Be the light to the world that you are called to be, pick up your walking stick and go out into the world to bring the light to all who need it.