

Readings

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Ephesians 1:3-14

John 1:1-9

Introduction to scripture

Today's texts are all about revelations of God. Jeremiah has the people singing for joy – while the young women dance and the young men and old are merry with rejoicing. Mourning is turned to joy and sorrow into gladness as God is revealed. In Ephesians we are encouraged to praise our God for we have been adopted into a family of full grace and love, and in John we are given prophesies of the light breaking through the darkness. We have just walked through the celebration of a day that is to reveal to us God's greatest gift the presence in our world of fullness of life – of great grace, love, faith, hope, peace and joy. As we hear the scriptures read this day may we know the fullness of that spirit.

Is he really here?

Joyce Rupp reflects on her hesitation of revelations of God. She says she finds revelations of God hard to trust when they are too ordinary. She says "I like to think that God is mostly revealed in something 'big' or outstandingly beautiful, like the Swiss Alps. The truth is however, that God is being revealed to us every day in those, nearest to us, wherever we are. It is how we look for God, what we expect, that makes the difference."¹ She suggests "Let us give up the 'high mountains and vast oceans' as our major searching places and come home to our simple lives."

Although I often feel closest to God in the mountains or on the ocean I believe Rupp has a good point. That is why I was intrigued by a reflection I read by Martin Copenhaver who suggested that properly celebrated perhaps Christmas would not be a fixed date. Christmas should be more like a surprise party arriving when we least expect it. "After all, no one knew when the Messiah was going to arrive, and we never really know when the spirit of Christ will be made known. It might be on a special holiday circled on our calendars, or it might not. Imagine waking up each morning and thinking, "Perhaps this is the day. Perhaps this is Christmas." Then, perhaps, we would know that the arrival of Christ is not something we plan or arrange. It is a gift. And you never know when it will be given."²

Perhaps we would live more fully that way – that is if we constantly lived in the emerging light. In the birth of fullness. I actually believe that is how we are created to live –in fullness that is or at least in search of it. "We are made for truth. From birth onward, we struggle to emerge into

¹ Rupp, Joyce "Inviting God In" pg. 42

² Copenhaver Martin B. Textweek.com still speaking daily devotional – Stretch Your Mind UCC

the light. No one could exist outside the light, but our desires rush forward in search of something more. The human soul brims with life and longing.” We are always on the search of something more.

And so Next week when we celebrate Epiphany we will walk with the Magi wise ones who came in search of the new king. “Like others devoted to knowledge, they did not fear where truth led them. They left home and traveled far from their language, land and familiar beliefs. What calls most deeply belongs to all peoples.” We are always searching partly because truth is rarely what we figure it will be. And so in faith and life we are called to be willing to embrace the wonder – not just at Christmas but always. Copenhaver suggests “Truth may seem like an ancient idol blocking our way. We are determined to make it purely on our own.” What if we were willing to stay curious to learn from history, wisdom, and even revelations of the spirit. What if even in this day and age we allowed ourselves to live into the wonder?

Personally it is partly how I survive because along with the festivity and beauty of the Christmas season there is still a persistent darkness. But somehow there is also a great light as revealed in Jesus. Black reflects “Walking in darkness is commonplace these days, as it has been throughout the ages. Yet today as much as ever, seeing a great light is a wonderful possibility in the midst of the darkness... A careful look at the person the Christ child became, the lives he touched with healing, and the impact his teaching has had over time and into the present helps us to better understand and experience God’s enduring love and compassionate concern for us.

We know that we live in the darkness of violence and warfare, suffering fueled by hatred, and poverty rooted in greed. This is the darkness of our times. Yet we also know that Jesus came to earth as God’s anointed one—to teach, to heal, to suffer death and be raised to life again by the power of God. That is nothing other than light. It is the very light that we carry into the world, as we live as the disciples Jesus has called us to be.”³

“So I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and that it happened to fall on December 25. That is, I hope that the spirit of the living Christ was palpably present in every way on that day. But if not, do not despair. The presence of Christ may be made known to you today, perhaps in a surprising moment of grace, after the expectation-laden holiday has already passed, just when you least expect it. It could be today. This could be the day when the promise of Christmas is fulfilled.”⁴

So as we enter into this new year I invite us to be alert to God with us – revealing to us the indwelling to the Holy Spirit each and every day. I invite you to take time in a guided meditation with me as we let go of the old and move into the new of the year and journey to come.

³ Black, Geoffrey – IBID

⁴ Copenhaver