

Readings

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Luke 1-2 (portions of)

John 1:1-14

**An Ordinary Extraordinary Story**

It is the night when Angels are singing, shepherds are herding and Wise ones will soon be hitting the road.

We know the story of light in the darkness where angels say be not afraid. We sing and rejoice and have our warm feelings, but what of the fear and darkness around us are we to ignore what is right in our face?

It would be easy for me to dive into this story and have us just sing and rejoice. But then we would be missing the depth of God's journey and presence birthed for us this night.

If this story happened in a time that was simpler than why would it happen at all. They wouldn't need a prophet to speak the words "the people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light." The promise of a Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace would have been meaningless.

And although some people wonder if the angles were real and if the shepherds and wise men really followed a star. People ask was Mary a virgin that God had chosen, or is there more we haven't been told? If you want you can find theories and questions and wonders that would explain all the miracles away. But for me whether myth or fact the story is true for it speaks to the needs of this world every day.

This is a story of ordinary and extraordinary, poor and rich, chosen and outcast all meshed into a regular transforming event in our world. This is a story where love breaks in and changes the way people.

The angles begin the story with words that seem hardly appropriate to say. "Be not afraid" young Mary for "I bring you good news of great joy." Now if angels appeared like they do in the movies all fluffy and pretty in white and in gold perhaps she would calm quick enough, and if Angels were pretty little children with wings the good news might be easy to hear; but history tells us Angels were terrifying messengers - soldiers with swords - hardly the gentle creatures we picture today. We have lightened this story in such a way that it hardly seems there's a point. The stable is pretty and golden with light and the babe and mom gently rest on the hay. But what of the atmosphere of the stable and the whole birthing process - rarely are either of these simply

pretty and gentle. Birthing a child in a stable would be uncomfortable, cold, smelly, painful, unsanitary, messy, and anything but ideal.

But God has a habit of showing up in unexpected places in unrealistic ways. John tells us that when Jesus was born “What came into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people the light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

God is the creator of transformation who longs to speak into the places that need to change. Jesus was called the light of the world, the prince of peace, deliverer, the true light full of Grace and glory.

What is Christmas about? What is this birth about?

This day is about an ordinary, extraordinary event that took place long ago that if we hold onto the truth of it today it will change our lives.

Ann Weems wrote:

“It was an ordinary event;  
after all women give birth every day.  
The baby cries; the woman puts the child to breast and the world goes on.  
God did not pitch a tent among us in an extraordinary way.

Jesus arrived as all of us do, powerless and dependent, a baby.  
What ordinary means for the Son of God!  
No royal robes, no crown, nor was there priestly garb at all  
just a naked baby born to dwell among us

And yet, in that ordinary place, holy was the night,  
for holy were the hearts of those who heard the word of God in the ordinary birth  
cry of a child.”<sup>1</sup>

I believe God has not changed God’s way of being alive in our world. God still shows up in ordinary ways to shine the light in the dark. Babies are still miracles of hope, peace, joy and love. But the difference is in our story today all creation stopped and took note of the extraordinary born on that night.

What if when we heard our saints and angels say “Be not afraid” we listened and learned. What if we walked this earth with the presence of peace and joy in our hearts. What if we birthed God’s light and life in our world in a way that others could see. What if we allowed the story of Jesus to give us new life this day. What if we believed that this extraordinary Jesus gave us tools

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<sup>1</sup> Weems, Ann “Searching for Shalom” pg. 83

to live our ordinary lives. I believe Christmas comes every time we believe in hope over despair, in joy over sadness, in peace over anxiety and warring, and in love over hatred.

This isn't a gentle story this is a story of God breaking into the darkest of nights in the lowliest of places shattering the way the world was.

With Ann Weems I believe Christmas comes over and over and over  
"Christmas comes every time we see God in other persons. The human and the holy meet in Bethlehem or in Times Square.

For Christmas comes like a golden storm on its way to Jerusalem  
determinedly, inevitably even now it comes  
in the face of hatred and warring  
no atrocity too terrible to stop it,  
no Herod strong enough,  
no hurt deep enough,  
no curse shocking enough,  
no disaster shattering enough -  
for someone on earth will see the star,  
someone will hear the angel voices,  
someone will run to Bethlehem,  
Someone will know peace and goodwill.  
The Christ will be born.<sup>2</sup>

Do we see the star, do we hear the angels song, do we run to Bethlehem to see this life, do we know peace and goodwill and will it be born again tonight?

Christmas day is our birth day - the day where we celebrate the birth of new life. For born this day is the true light which enlightens everyone. Jesus came into this world to fill it with grace and glory. This is the day where we in the world hope to align with the Holy of Holies and bring peace, joy and love to all creation.

We will allow the light of life to be born this day - will we follow the star and shout to the lowly I bring you good news of great joy? Let us live out the peace on earth we are called to as we hold onto the truth that is born this night.

Love comes healing, God revealing Friends be joyful and believe  
For The Christ is born tonight!

Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Weems Ann. IBID