



REFLECTION

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And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

Merry Christmas!

We may have expected the re-telling of Jesus’ birth from Matthew or Luke’s Gospels. Instead, we contemplate God’s origin story through the poetic, lyrical prose of John.

Today we consider a new beginning, a moment when “God so loved the world that God sent us his only son.” This break-through pierces our linear understanding and accounting of the world’s story filled with pain, suffering, triumph, and defeat. God’s mercy is revealed in a loveable, cuddle-able newborn baby whose limits far outweigh his ability to be independent and to govern with clarity.

How clever, indeed is our God! It’s obvious. Babies have a way of re-focusing, re-purposing, re-organizing the ways we live, the ways we speak, the ways we allow ourselves to practice love and care. My newborn child is 4 months old and she is large and in charge! I may think my day revolves around my work, my desires, my needs, but her very existence draws me to her in ways that allow me to be softer, more present, more appreciative and grateful, more curious, more sensitive. I am taken by the drama of her cry for food, a diaper change or a nap. She reorientates my day’s disappointments with a coo and a laugh. And my day’s victories are short-lived until the next cry.

Our God chose to reveal God’s self... God who has always been and continues to be... as tender, dramatic, and reorienting as a newborn child. Our God’s love can be as fragile as a baby’s breath. But that fragility is not weakness or strength. Instead, that fragility is real, demands attention, demands a response and an action from us.

SERVICE SUGGESTION

Don’t think. Don’t buy. Don’t get stuck in despair. Don’t disengage. Find a child to watch, to hold, to listen to. Do this with another person or a small gaggle of friends. Bring that experience of tenderness and amusement to a local shelter, food pantry, street corner or Zoom Room. Bring that experience of attentiveness and willingness to live into joy to the next time you talk with someone you have lost patience for. Commit to serving the child in others, everyday, in every situation you find yourself in.

Focus: SPIRITUALITY

Living in a community that explicitly created room to name and grow in our own practices of Spirituality gave me the courage to explore my faith and theirs, too. I am grateful for the gift of courage to explore many images of God.

Does John’s account of the beginning awaken a different experience of God? Have you ever prayed to the baby Jesus? Have you ever pretended to be a follower of John the Baptist just to imagine what kind of person you would be or what kind of person John would have to be? My practice of Spirituality grew wide and deep while intentionally being of service.

What new or different way of praying is God calling you to explore this Christmas?

PRAYER

Loving and Gracious God, on this Christmas Day we thank you for the gift of your child, a human being in every way (except sin) like us! May Jesus' shining light draw our own light out of ourselves so that we may stand squarely in the truth of who, whose, and where we are.

We pray that we might grow in courage, like John the Baptist, to be so convinced of Your goodness that our testimony of Your love does not promote neutrality, but rather an accompaniment, an affection for those most vulnerable around us. We ask all this, through Your little, baby son whose life gives meaning and purpose to ours. Amen.

