

B Christmas Day, 2015

John 1:1-14

Poulsbo

Pastor Alison Shane

Phew. What just happened?

Shopping – presents – family – wrapping – shopping – concerts – cleaning – shopping – wrapping – caroling – presents – worship – shopping – chaos – tired.

“Christmas, Christmas time is here, and Christmas songs you love to hear, thoughts of joy and hope and cheer, but mostly shopping! Shopping! Shopping!”

Phew. What just happened?

Shepherds – decrees – journeys – angels – wise men – animals – songs – no sleep – a baby.

Phew. What just happened?

What just happened? This fall, we’ve been following God’s story with Israel through the Old Testament. Again and again, we’ve heard stories of God’s faithfulness, of God’s creative care, of God’s presence with and in Israel. John summarizes the whole of this thus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”

This is the story of God in the Old Testament in a nutshell. And John goes on: “He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

That’s what just happened here. What just happened is that God’s faithfulness came to a climax. What just happened is that God is here. And, according to John, dare I say it?, Christmas is not so much about a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Christmas, according to John, is a celebration of *your* birth. “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.”

In baptism, God transformed you from merely a creation, a creature, into a child of God. In baptism, God claimed you. You are born of God. In baptism, God has proclaimed, “I have forgiven you your sin. I love you forever. In me, you now have life.”

This life that God has given you is not just life eternal. It’s LIFE right now. It’s life abundant. This life that God has given you in baptism is your light. It makes you the light – God’s light – to all people.

That baptismal light life takes on a very different look from our life before.

At the community Christmas concert a few weeks ago, our choir sang about this new life in a poem by Howard Thurman, set to music by Dan Forrest. The poem goes like this:

When the song of the angels is stilled,

When the star in the sky is gone,

When the kings and princes are home,

When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost, To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry, To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.

What just happened? God happened. And now life happens. A baptismal life. So in the wake of the chaos of these last weeks, take a deep breath and focus, because now begins the baptismal life:

To find the lost, To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry, To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations, To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.

Thanks be to God.