

## What did you get for Christmas?

Ch 1 Yr B John 1:1-14 December 26, 2021

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“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” John 1:1

I’ll be honest this seems like a strange lesson to read on the day after Christmas. After all there is no of Mary or Joseph, no shepherds in the fields watching their flocks by night, no angels making pronouncements or singing in heaven, not even a verse about Jesus being born and laid in a manger. No star in the sky, no wise men searching for the newborn king.

Yet the truth is that this lesson from John’s Gospel is the traditional reading at Christmas and it is a good one for us to hear on December 26th. Because with all of the stories of shepherds and magi in our heads, with the decorations around us, and the music still ringing in the air, this unusual reading makes us stop for a moment and consider who the baby is who lays in the manger. This lesson shifts our attention from all the events that swirl around the birth of Jesus, the stable, the star, the excitement, and the activity, to focus on the baby born in Bethlehem.

Now through the familiar stories of Christmas we know that the newborn lying in the manger is special. We know that he is the saviour long promised by God whose arrival is announced by angels. We know that he is a king announced by heaven honoured by Wiseman coming from the east. And this reading from John’s Gospel adds to our understanding of Jesus by reminding us that the babe born to Mary is even more that all that.

Because when we hear the words “in the beginning” from the gospel we can’t help but remember the creation story from Genesis where God spoke and everything came into existence. When those words are used at the start of John’s witness we are invited to look at the story of Jesus as a new beginning. A new beginning not merely as every new life is a new beginning, but that Jesus’ birth is a new beginning for everyone in the world.

For the baby born in Bethlehem, the Messiah long promised, the newborn king is the one through whom God will remake creation. Just as God made everything in the beginning, now God will now remake everything once again through Jesus. Through the child of promise there will be a fresh start, a new hope, a renewal of

everything and everyone. For the baby born in the city of David brings the promise of God's love and grace for all the people on earth. And that promise comes not merely in words that will be spoken but also in actions that will transform the way we think about God, ourselves, and our world.

And we know that. We understand that everything changes because of what happens on Christmas because we look back at the birth of Jesus through the witness of the disciples, through his resurrection, through his death on the cross, through his teachings and his life. And through all of those ways we see that God is changing our world and our lives. Because in Jesus we hear and see and have the chance to experience and know the wonder of God's grace, the power of God's love, and the truth of God's commitment to us. For the story of salvation which we celebrate beginning in Bethlehem is a story which restarts in every generation and every life which listens to the word of God speaking.

For baby lying in the manger grows in wisdom and stature and teaches of God's forgiveness and mercy. The child born in a stable is the saviour who dies on the cross and rises from the grave to show us and give us the new life God intends. And that is what the wisemen see breaking forth in the sky which causes them to travel so far to worship and honor the new king.

That is a good news of great joy of the angels which moves shepherds from the fields to find the promised saviour. That is the gospel which still has a power and a promise for us in our troubled and unsettled world. For the new beginning which God makes for us in Jesus is the reason we celebrate Christmas.

And this year we need that perhaps more than ever. Because we are tired, we are anxious, we are frustrated, we are all the things we are feeling right now. Because our world is unsettled and frightening and the way ahead is so unsure. So as well as hearing the news of the angels, seeing the actions of the wisemen, we need to understand the reason God sends Jesus and what God does in Jesus.

For at Christmas God comes among us to show us the truth of grace, the renewal of love, the promise of hope and how God is remaking and renewing our lives and our world. For in the beginning the word was with God and the word was God. And at Christmas we celebrate God with us, Emmanuel, and we look to the new life God brings to earth.