

Christmas Eve Reflection

Rev. Todd B. Freeman
College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa December 24, 2016

Preachers always struggle with what they hope to be the right word to share at a Christmas Eve Service. This year, I thought I'd turn to some words that have inspired me this Christmas season. Hopefully, they will also inspire you and your journey of faith.

Chris Glaser is a progressive Christian author on the topic of spirituality, exploring the ways in which we connect with God. While reminding us of the importance of times of silence, those occasions when it is best to just listen, either to a friend or to God or to your own heart, he recognizes "at other times **we need to hear a word. A word of hope. A word of encouragement. A word of love.**" Now is indeed one of those times. Glaser writes:

The Bible is the story of a God who tries a multitude of ways to speak to us. A voice in the wilderness. Commandments written in stone. Oracles of prophets seeking justice and mercy.

But then God changes strategy. **Instead of speaking from the top down, from the outside in, God decides to speak from the inside out. Christian scriptures assert that God became Emmanuel, God-with-us, so as to be able to speak as an insider about the human experience.** And began with the humblest human form, that of a baby. Then was manifest as a teacher and healer and martyr.

Instead of a commanding presence, God decided to manifest a compassionate presence. Instead of taking charge, instead of being in control, as [as God was and is] in creation, God decided to persuade us rather than coerce us, to be our shepherd rather than our ruler...

God wanted to touch us, to teach us, from the inside out. And so touched our hearts with just the right word, **the Word made flesh**—a baby, a builder, a rabbi, a lover [of all people and all of creation].

The mystic [who wrote what we call the Gospel of] John had a vision that this was always God's intention—that the Word made flesh was one and the same with the Word that was the inspiration of creation, the cause not only of our being reborn from above, but the origin of our being born at all.

When we celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth we acknowledge that Love became flesh and dwells among us. As Christians, those who follow the ways and teachings of Jesus, that Divine Sacred Presence of Love has become our definitive revelation of the very nature and character of God. And as the story of the gospels unfold, we learn we are blessed with the opportunity to experience that Loving Presence not only with and among us, but **within** us as well – from the inside out. Perhaps that was God's strategy all along, to **transform things, including ourselves, from the inside out.**

Connect with that Presence, with that indwelling Love. It is a Love that never ends. Perhaps this is the word you and I need to hear and live out this Christmas.

Amen.

Resource: Chris Glaser, *The Word We Need This Christmas*, 2007.