

"Truth and Grace." -January 1, 2017
by Wayne J. Schneider - Soli Deo Gloria

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St. John 1:10-18

St. Luke's gospel holds the Nativity story we love and remember, because we just heard it read in our Christmas Eve service. And, we have read it personally so many times. You won't find it in St. Mark's or St. John's gospel. In St. Matthew we find the Magi. Bad boy Herod, the death of the Innocents, and our Savior exiting Egypt. Who'd a thought?

In St. John's gospel the Nativity is made of "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (1:1) "And we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (1:14). Not so much there to plan a Christmas Program.

Without a whole bunch of computer generated images, the congregation is hard-pressed to understand St. John's Nativity. But then, understanding the birth of Jesus is never a matter of an hour, but of a lifetime of not living up to but living into the promise.

In verse 12 of this chapter, "But, to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God," the word for "power" does not signify strength, but ability and independence to make a choice. Through St. John God is saying, "Jesus is my Son. In the flesh. He is with me from the beginning. He is in me and I am in him. You have a choice: you can be my child too." You and I may become each other's finest work!

We can be children who just 'get by.' Or we may be children who carry the burden of being perfect. Are we generous or are we users? What life-force did we learn from our family system? And, when we view the scenes from Syria, do our hearts break?

Today is literally the beginning of a new year. Have you made any resolutions? Were they put forward as a child of God's Kingdom? I know these questions don't appear to be "happy" questions, only a few days from Christmas. They smell a bit like 'duty and guilt.' After all, there is a game at noon and the_difficult question might be

"Why on earth did they call a 'reverse' on third and thirty-five?"

No need for us to feel guilty now; Lent is just around the corner. The Nativity call is for you and I to be Jesus in the flesh. To live alive, fully and luxuriously, spiritually on purpose. This is a sermon on nativity; and the nativity is you. We are the word made living flesh, who have applied our God-given authority to be named children of God, who make New Years resolutions in the Lord's Name.

At the same time, recalling that we are those for whom the Word became flesh originally, we are they for whom Jesus came. We are the reason Jesus was born in Bethlehem; was crucified and raised from the dead to eternal life. A resolution not made on New Year's Eve, but before the foundation of the cosmos was laid.

Please note verse 14 again, *"We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."* Truth and grace. Not monotony or toil and difficulty. If you had to describe *your life* right now, what two words would you use? Hand to mouth? Death and taxes? Or living as a child of God? Blessing and Service? Rejoicing and sharing? Praying and acting? Free and forgiven?

It is Christmas yet and a new year, too. Unwrap your gifts. Become a child of God. Transform your life. Amending the world. Alleluia. Amen.