

Christmas Day: David Lose

John 1:1-14, 16-18 ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ 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...¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

I share with you today a reflection on today's Gospel from Professor David Lose.
<http://www.davidlose.net/2016/12/christmas-eveday-a-christmas-beginnings/>

Unlike Luke [whose story of shepherds and angels we read last night], John shares no traditional narrative [of Jesus' birth], but instead offers something both more theological and poetic. Theological in the sense that John begins his whole Gospel with a meditation on the Word of God made flesh; poetic in that it is more *song* than reflection, John's "hymn to the Word."

[Now], beginnings are important. [Starting his Gospel] by quoting the first line of the author of Genesis ["In the beginning..."] is an audacious move [for John], akin to **my** starting a novel by writing, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." With this bold move, John declares that he is writing a *new* Genesis, a new story of God's interaction with humanity that is every bit as important, and perhaps more so, than the original. For according to John, that's what Jesus is – God's reinvention and rebirth and renewal of the whole creation and, indeed, *of God's own self*, as God comes to make manifest God's enduring commitment to – and love for – the world, in and through ordinary and finite human flesh.

While John is sometimes accused of [being "too theological"], his... purpose is clear, [and it is this]: that what we see in Jesus is what we can expect from God. Jesus is no messenger, but rather **is God**, creating and redeeming as only God can.... This eternal and creative and divine Word took on human flesh in Jesus

(v. 14), introducing a new chapter in the story of God and God's people by creating a new possibility for experiencing God's grace. For while God "as God" is beyond our comprehension or knowledge, ... **Jesus** reveals God's loving and parental heart, making known to us the character and commitment of the One who created us *and* can redeem us (v. 18).

And it's not just *grace* that Jesus offers, John [tells us], but grace **upon** grace, *more* grace than we can imagine, grace so abundant it's like – the best wine ever offered, rivers of living water gushing up from our hearts, unending growth of the vine and tree of life. All of the images John will play with throughout the rest of his gospel, in fact, are [foreshadowed] in this theological introduction and song.

But perhaps my favorite part of John's hymn is his promise that, while we gather on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to celebrate **Christ's** birth, it is really our *own new* birth and beginning for which we should give thanks and even sing and dance. For God coming in the flesh gives humanity hope that we are **more** than the sum of our parts, that there is more to this world and life than we may at first see, and that God in Christ simultaneously *hallows* our created lives [and frees] us from the constraints of our frail and fragile [human] condition. For those who believe, John writes, Jesus "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." (v. 12-13) The Word becomes flesh [in order] that **all** who *are* flesh may realize and *live into* our identity as God's beloved children.

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