

CHRISTMAS EVE and DAY (B-5) God's light in a child!

We celebrate today why Jesus wanted to be born. We celebrate that we are favored by God and, we are gifts to each other. By becoming one of us God says humanity is worth having and saving. He says I am “‘God-with-you,’ Emmanuel, and ‘God-like-you,’ human. My mission you can complete.” By being born in a manger, a feeding trough, he gives us our mission: to feed each other as God feeds us.

“People walking in darkness have seen a great light?” What is our darkness? What is our light? If we consider darkness to be fear, doubt or uncertainty; if racial or classist prejudice; if victims of a crime, legal or not, then look to the holy family. Their uncertainty turns to fear as they become emigrants, refugees, and homeless. Sound familiar? God-with-us and God-like us! Listen to a story of the Old American West.

Into Roaring Camp, a mining camp, the only woman, Cherokee Sal, a disreputable woman, died giving birth to boy. Imagine a baby left with an all-male environment of the toughest, greediest men in the west. What could they do?

This group of tough guys decided, after much discussion, to raise the child themselves. They called the child, “Tommy Luck.” He was kept immaculately clean in the cabin. They bought him a beautiful rosewood crib, which made the cabin look shabby. So they had to fix up the rest of the furniture to match the crib’s beauty. If they wanted to carry the child, they had to clean up.

The presence of the child transformed the Camp. Since the baby needed rest, the camp became quieter and much more dignified. Soon, they no longer lived up to the name, Roaring Camp. Tommy Luck had made them become good and gracious fathers.

(Paraphrased from “Good News for tough times,” Dynamic Preaching, Vol. XI, No. 9, 1996, pg. 57-58)

When the light goes on, we can see what needs to change. We notice things like filth, dust, and sin. A child turned Roaring Camp into Rearing Camp, where men became daddies that recognized their call to soften, clean up, and love their adopted child. Light changed them.

Jesus Christ, along with Mary and Joseph, became lights in the darkness of a culture of death. They became what the star did for the shepherds and the Magi. What darkness in us needs this light?

Perhaps it is the threat or reality of being laid off. Perhaps it is the threat or reality of losing our house. Perhaps it's not having enough money to buy food, or pay the rent or mortgage or get the medicine that is needed. Perhaps it's the guilt of not being able to buy gifts this year, or to give a Christmas bonus to your workers. Perhaps it's the 1st Christmas without a certain loved one at home. Whatever our darkness, Jesus, Mary and Joseph have been there, done that, and they say, "Fear not."

If we can see in an infant the need to be there for him/her, if we can see in an infant the light of God-with-us and God-like-us, then we are blind no longer. A child, whether born rich or poor, has that effect on all of humanity. What wisdom God had to become one of us!

Our wisdom, then, is to become One-with-God and to be One-like-God. If we don't, we may have beliefs, but not faith. Faith, like love, is both a verb and a noun. Faith without works is dead. Love without works is just a word. Jesus invites us by becoming One-with-us and One-like us to be One-with-him and One-like-him. Just like a student who finally gets a new lesson and the "light goes on in one's brain and face," so does the Christian who finally gets why Jesus came, will become light to a darkened world, and food for a love-starved world.

Do we have faith or just beliefs? Does our life show that we really believe in God-with-us and God-like us? Even Jesus later said, "if you don't believe in me, believe in the works that I do." So, if we don't yet believe that we can be with God and like God, let our works show our desire to believe. Others will see the light of our works and draw near, just like a rough, tough man sees the light of a child and draws near, and is transformed by the child's light. This little light of mine, I'm going to...