

## ***"Wisdom Anchors"***

*John 1:1-18*

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Early in Advent, I had a talk with a friend who is struggling with being isolated during the pandemic. She lives alone in a state far away from family and friends. She no longer has the job that moved her there and is looking for new work. As the days got shorter, the nights longer and the news of Covid 19 cases and deaths got worse, she said she felt fearful and alone. As we were talking, we began to discuss the things she does during her day that help her feel less isolated and more connected with God. She mentioned her meditation practice and walks outside when the days are warm enough. She lives in a rented house on the edge of a marsh so she can watch the sunrise and the sunset and see the sky change over the seasons. Its beauty helps her to remember that there is beauty even in times of darkness. After reflecting for a minute, she said: "During times like these we really need to hang on to those Wisdom Anchors that bring us back to light and love."

She's right. It is our Wisdom Anchors that center us in being children of God. These anchors are spiritual practices that help us remember and recall God's faithful presence of light in the midst of darkness. It is our Wisdom Anchors that remind us of the promise of the Christ child – God with us.

Our Gospel reading this morning is one of the most important Wisdom Anchors of our faith. Even though we've heard it during this Christmas season, the lectionary includes it today, this second Sunday of Christmastide, because of the importance of remembering that the Light of God is with us.

It's a familiar passage. Many of us know it by heart, or at least a few lines of it: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." We learn that the Word is the light of the World and the light comes in the darkness and the darkness shall not overcome it. Later toward the end of the Prologue, scripture teaches that those who receive the Son, who believe in his name, are given the power to become children of God. With beautiful, poetic writing, our scripture reminds us that God is mysterious – no one has ever seen God. Yet, our text tells us the Son is the great revealer of God. We get to glimpse into the mystery of God by experiencing the Glory of the Son of God who comes in grace and truth.

This scripture, a Wisdom Anchor for our faith, invites us to look deeper and listen for the more specific Wisdom Anchors that will guide us – Grace and Truth.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, Bob and I came over to church to see the living Nativity. I'd heard about it in staff meetings on Zoom and wanted to see it in person. It hadn't been the easiest month and I was feeling a bit overwhelmed by life. After greeting people who were milling around watching the scene, I decided I wanted to meet the camel who was happily munching hay and watching over our nativity. When I walked over to the camel, one of the little angels who was joyfully feeding the camel its hay, started talking to me. We both had masks on and she was about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of my height so I bent down to say to her that I was sorry she couldn't see

my smile, hidden behind my mask, while she chatted away. "Oh," she said: "You can see my smile even with my mask on because when I smile my eyes get really small because my cheeks push them closed. Then you know I'm smiling. You know what! I smile all the time. I'm always having smaller eyes. It's funny." On and on she chatted about this and that for just a few minutes, but as I stood there, I knew it was a moment of grace. My heart shifted from feeling overwhelmed to delighted. I'd been completely blessed by a little, camel feeding, Christmas angel. I heard Wisdom tell me to pay attention! This little one was reminding me to see God's grace in the midst of everyday details. I needed to be still and rest in the grace.

Scripture also teaches that truth is a Wisdom Anchor. Over many months our nation has argued about what is true. Later, at the end of our Gospel when Jesus is about to be crucified, we hear Pontius Pilate ask Jesus "what is truth?" It's a challenging concept, but our scripture is not teaching about human ideas of truth. It is teaching about Holy truth – God's truth. That's our Wisdom Anchor.

A few days ago, I read a news story about a young girl named Emily who was very excited about Christmas. She and her parents decided to decorate their lawn with Christmas cheer, including an inflatable Black Santa. Soon after they received a hateful, anonymous note telling them to remove the black Santa because Santa had been white for the past 600 years. Stunned, Emily's parents shared this on Facebook. Soon, they noticed that their neighbors began putting up Black Santas – so many of them that the stores were selling out. The outpouring of love, support and unity from the community was incredible. Emily's parents said: "At the end of the day, what was meant for evil was flipped for good." This family experienced the truth of Love in action. Our scripture teaches that the light that shines in the darkness shines for ALL people. This birth of Christ comes for each of us in Grace and in Truth.

One of the nicest things that happened for me this Christmas was on December 21<sup>st</sup>. We were told that for the first time in hundreds of years the Christmas star would shine in the sky. I learned that we needed to go outside at 5pm to see it. Bob and I went out and found it low in the horizon. The star looked like every star but it was bright. It was wonderful to stand there and witness it and to realize the star's light matters, this story matters.

Later, my sister sent a photo that she'd received from her church that was taken of the star in Bulgaria where it shone brightly in the sky. See photo below. **This is what we need to remember.** Even in this time of darkness, even when our hearts feel heavy and we're saddened by this incredible story of the pandemic and all who have lost their lives, we're invited in our faith to keep the light of Christ alive within us, among us and around us in Grace and in Truth.

May God be with us on the journey. Amen.

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