

What Do You See?

a sermon

by Dan Griswold

Trinity Reformed Church

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John 1:1-4, 14

I am glad that all of you are here, with me, on this special night. I am glad, because I know that we all come here for a variety of reasons.

Some of us are here because it's just what we do.

Some of us come because it's expected of us.

Some of us come to share a tradition with family.

Some of us are here for the music.

Some of us come for the candlelight.

Some of us come to find a measure of peace in the midst of turmoil.

These are decent reasons, good enough, maybe even very good. And if you succeed in fulfilling the reasons that brought you here, then the evening won't be wasted for you. You can check this evening off your todo list, mark it as DONE.

But is that all? For, as good as these reasons are, they don't really answer this important question: What does it all mean?

Really. What does it all mean?

The readings, the songs, the anthems, all of them in their own way recounting ancient events and promises even more ancient ... what does it all mean?

Perhaps, for you, it means not a whole lot.

Perhaps, for you, it means everything

When I ask you, "What does it all mean?" I am asking about something bigger — or broader, or deeper — than can be answered by appealing to obligation, or entertainment, or family, or a feeling.

I believe that what it all means is found in those words I read a few minutes ago: "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."

There, right there, is the point of it all: in Jesus, we see God's glory.

In Jesus, this one of whom songs are sung and scriptures read, we see God's glory.

In Jesus, this baby born in poverty, we see God's glory.

In Jesus, this infant laid in a manger, we see God's glory.

In Jesus, this helpless child, we see God's glory.

In Jesus, who was visited first not by important people but first by lowly shepherds, we see God's glory.

That is at the heart of what Christians believe about Christmas. For the Christian faith, Christmas is first of all

the celebration of the birth of Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
the incarnation of God,
the coming of “Immanuel,” God with us.

In Jesus, we see the glory, the beauty, the majesty, of *God*. It is *God* who is in Jesus. That’s who we see in Jesus.

When we see Jesus, then we see who God really is, rather than what we imagine God to be.

When we see Jesus, we see that God’s power is so great that God has no problem clothing it in weak flesh, in vulnerable infancy.

When we see Jesus, we see that God is
strong *and* compassionate,
just *and* merciful.

Yes, in Jesus, we see who God is. But there’s more. In Jesus, we also see who *we* are *supposed* to be. We see what it really means to be human. We see truest humanity. We see who God made us to be.

The miracle of Christmas, the blessing of Jesus, is that God wants us to learn this, and God wants to teach us this. And in Jesus, God does. In Jesus, God shows us what it means to be truly human. In Jesus, God stoops down

to help us who need the help,
to show us who need to be shown,
to tell us, “Here, now, let me show you how it’s done.”



This starts at Christmas. It begins in the manger, as we see the power of God shown in a helpless babe. It gets going in Bethlehem, as we see the majesty of God in the birth of a child to an impoverished, not-yet-married, young, refugee woman. That’s the start of our being taught in Jesus who God is and who we are.

It’s a good start. A great start. But it is only the start.

Many of us, I would guess, like looking at baby pictures. Yet here’s what we all know about baby pictures. You can’t know who someone is going to become just by looking at a baby picture. Really, we get it that the opposite is what truly happens. You understand the baby picture better by knowing the person whom that baby became. The picture takes on greater, deeper meaning for us because we know the adult, and we bring this knowledge to that picture. We see the whole story, allowing us to see the child in the adult and the adult in the child. But not until we know the adult.

So it is with Jesus. We can’t know Jesus fully by looking only at *his* baby picture. Rather, we know the infant all the more by coming to know the man that this infant grew to become.

From that manger, Jesus grew, his story continued, his demonstration of true God and true humanity progressed. And so our understanding of Jesus must grow, as well. It grows by following the course of Jesus. It grows by seeing him in all the contours of his ministry:

his teaching,
his healing,
his confronting,
his forgiving,
his suffering,
his dying,
his rising.

In each of these, God has come near to us and says “Here I am.” In each of these, God has come near to us and tells us, “You see, here’s how it’s done.”

My friends, look to Jesus. What do you see?

Look at him in the manger.

What do you see?

Look at him teaching the people.

What do you see?

Look at him feeding the hungry.

What do you see?

Look at him breaking bread with sinners.

What do you see?

Look at him washing the feet of his disciples.

What do you see?

Look at him on the cross.

What do you see?

Look at him risen in glory.

What do you see?

May God give us the grace to see divine glory in Jesus, and to live according to his example.