

Did anything change? Did Christmas Matter? 1/3 of the Country travelled this Christmas, we stimulated the economy with purchases. But “The Messiah” entering our world, GOD becoming human... did this matter? We got a new Cell Phone that allows us to do different things. We got an electric car that saves gas and saves natural resources. We received our third booster shots and endured sore shoulders and temperature. But did Christmas matter?

The Evangelist of the Fourth Gospel describes, not a new star in the heavens, not magi crossing the globe to recognize him, not even an Angel Chorus appearing to Shepherds. Instead, according to John, this change comes in each of us as we recognize that God did not suddenly come into being on Christmas morning, God has always been. As one of our members said to me last week “The Alpha and the Omicron”!

Recognizing LIFE is more than we previously thought! Do we go on with our depressions? Do we continue listening to the voices in our head that tell us we are not good enough, life is unjust and you were taken advantage of? OR do we embrace the INCARNATION of God With Us: Emmanuel! an acceptance of reality different than we had ever imagined?

When we were in Grade School and Junior High, reality was presented to us as a set of facts. The world is round and as part of a solar system revolves around the Sun, while our moon circles the earth. Columbus discovered America. $2+2 = 4$. In Sunday School we read Genesis describing that EVEN before Creation, there was God, a waste and void, alone God the Creator called Light and Time and Space into being. Thousands of years later Mary had a baby in Bethlehem who grew up to die on the Cross. After all that, the Holy Spirit came calling us to form communities of faith, churches that every Sunday will be full. Here I am not suggesting Darwin’ Evolution, Dinosaurs, or Alternative Facts. But what if, what if life were **more poetic and fluid and shared** than facts?

Judaism was the first religion, and only one at the time, that espoused belief in ONE TRUE GOD. So does the New Testament propose, do we believe in the birth of a second GOD? What meaning do we have for SON OF GOD? Are these two distinct personages.

What does it mean: if the Christ, the Savior identity of God, were present with the Creator in Creation at the Beginning? Is Creation/this Life/this reality, different, if instead of Created out of nothingness and blessed as Good, complete with Sabbath; or Divinely created by God but ruined by humanity, exiled from ever being with God; VERSUS in the Beginning The Christ / the Savior was present with God in the ACT of creation? If the Savior/the Redeemer were with God at the Beginning, is this suggesting that Creation was intentionally in need of redemption, needing to be saved?

But John also inserts another nuance here... John does not say “the Christ was with God”, or “the Savior was with God”, but says **the WORD was with God**. What does this mean? Could it be that THOUGHT, LANGUAGE were a part of the act of Creation, just as there was creation of Light and Darkness, Solid Ground versus Waters above the Earth and Beneath the Firmament? What meaning to we assign to the preposition WAS WITH GOD? Is John saying: God the Creator and The WORD Jesus are two separate entities that are one, OR Just as I am your Ordained Pastor, Pastor Diane’s Partner in Ministry; and I am Judy’s Husband and Father to our Sons, that these are differing identities simultaneously shared by God.

Shifting emphasis, the Gospel endorses that John and Jesus each had clear understanding of their identity, clearer sense of personal identity and purpose than I have ever had. When I was first in ministry at age 27 or 28 a reference described "Craig, I can envision the time when you have sat up all night with a family in the hospital, and you have to decide whether to stay with them or to go to the Church for Worship?" Which at the time I thought was a bit harsh, but late one Saturday night a 3 year old was found drowning and I recall sitting with them, praying with them, until about 8:30 Sunday morning and having to question "where do I need to be?"

As bold and clearly thought out as this passage, as self-assured as John the Baptist, there is also a humility described here. "John came to bear witness, testifying: to the Light, he himself was not the light." What if our purpose and identity in life were not to be the George Washingtons or Alexander Hamiltons, but we recognized in ourselves: the importance of being the instrument of other's greatness. If we have been the Teacher who inspired, if we have been the Administrative Assistant who made all the arrangements, corrected the spelling, planned out events for others to lead? What if we were the Cyrano?

There is a confidence expressed about Jesus. Aware that everyone is not going to accept, to understand. In all of the Gospels I see this reflected only in three other places, when the Rich, Young Ruler asks what he must do, then walks away dissatisfied with what it will cost him to follow Jesus; Judas kissing Jesus as Jesus says "Do quickly what you must;" and with Pilate, when Pilate cannot even comprehend "What is the Truth?"

There are times when persons have not wanted to listen, have been unwilling to compromise or to change.

This Sacrament is all about considering another different reality. Seeing and recognizing our wrongs. Hoping for reconciliation. But our purpose and identity as Christians follows from the last sentence here: ***"It is God the only Son, close to the Father's heart, who has made God known."*** As followers, by our actions and commitments, we make God known.