

Magna-Doodle World

1st Sunday after Christmas – Galatians 4:4-7, John 1:1-18

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, December 28, 2014

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

Merry Christmas!

The weather last week, including Christmas Eve was kind of dismal. Now, don't get me wrong, I'll take the dreary, rainy, just cold enough to never be able to get quite warm weather we had last week over the bone-chilling freeze we had most of last winter any day. But when the sun came out on Christmas morning, I suspect that most people shared the near elation that came over me that day. As I locked things up here after the Christmas morning service and joined Jenny and J.D. for our trip down to Clarksville and our Christmas feast with Jenny's folks, I practically soaked up the clear, blue sky with just the right amount of high, wispy clouds painted across to make it really beautiful.

Later in the day, entirely too full from our feast, drowsy from being up so late Christmas Eve, and just grateful for the day, and the season, and life in general, I went outside to watch that same sky turn its sunset shades, and I was reminded of a toy from years ago, the Magna-Doodle, kind of an Etch-a-Sketch in the form of a globe.

Another Christmas season, oh, twenty years ago at least, I was driving down the road in Virginia or Alabama when J.D. noticed a particularly beautiful sunset. "You know," he said, "the world is kind of like a Magna-Doodle-Globe that God writes on whenever he wants." I thought that was a pretty profound thought from a nine-or-ten-year-old, and I said so. Not willing, however, to leave good enough alone, (probably an occupational hazard or a side effect of my then-so-recent seminary education) not willing to leave good enough alone, I offered the observation that there are some people that thing that God made the whole world and everything that is, got everything spinning in its proper place, and then just stepped back to let it pretty much run by itself. "Kind of like when you wind up your alarm clock," I told them. The back seat crowd became very quiet, not at all characteristic for that bunch at the time. After a near-record silence of ten to fifteen seconds, Kyle, my younger boy, said, "That's silly! You don't believe that, do you, Daddy?"

No, I do not. As a matter of fact, though, Christmas is probably the best time of the year to take up such a question. After all, the message of Christmas is a direct answer to *just* such a question. Christmas is, in fact, the celebration of the good news that God did not stay aloof, that he became personally involved with creation, that he dug down deep into the dirt of humanity by putting his own self on the line. Our Gospel lesson this morning is probably the defining statement of the incarnation, God becoming man to insert his divine presence into the human situation. "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word became flesh and lived among us."

So long as we celebrate the joy of Christmas, we cannot see God as uninvolved in creation. But we can run into a similar problem if we limit the incarnation to that one event two-thousand years ago. If we read the words of John's hymn to the Word of God, "In the beginning was the Word..." it is easy enough to look at the work as completed. Through Christ, God has done the work that needed to be done, he has spoken the Word into creation, and it is finished.

The reason that we gather, year after year, however, to offer thanksgiving to Almighty God for the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, is that the past tense does not, cannot apply to him. He not only *became* flesh, but, as he intercedes for us in the eternal presence of the Father, he bears our flesh *still*. He not only was the Rod, the second person of the Holy Trinity, but he *continues* to be that ever-present *speaking* of God, the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. We gather in awe and wonder, we spiritually and

emotionally travel back to Bethlehem in order to adore the child who was born there because he and he alone is the one in whom the salvation of humanity I accomplished for all time. We kneel with the shepherds, we sing with the angels because in the birth of this one particular, singular, and unique person called Jesus, the living God himself became one with us in order to accomplish our redemption for all time. God was not aloof. He is not distant. In the birth of the Christ, God was and continues to be actively involved with you and me. That is the holy presence. That is the all-powerful mystery before which we bow this Christmas season.

Anyway, Christmas Day afternoon, entirely too full from our feast, drowsy from being up so late Christmas Eve, and just grateful for the day, and the season, and life in general, I went outside to watch the sky turn its sunset shades, and I thought about other sunsets, and my children, and Magna-Doodle-Globes, I thought about little babies, and shepherds, and crosses. I thought about the God who loved me before time, the God who loved me once in Bethlehem, the God who loves me *here*, and *now*.

“God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,” Paul told the Galatians, “crying ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a *child*.” I promised to focus on our Epistle readings this year, but I think John said it even better. “In the beginning was the Word... and the Word became flesh and lived among us. From *his* fullness we have *all* received, grace upon grace.”

Merry Christmas!