

Midnight Sermon: readings set III

John 1.1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And 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.

Have you ever stopped to marvel at the miracle of how people come into being? One year, as the family gathers for Christmas, there are just two people, then by the next, there are three! A whole new person has entered the world, with their own personality that will develop, their own skills and passions, their own mistakes to make, their life before them. It's like magic! The creation of a person feels like a mystery, while also being a completely normal part of life. And tonight we celebrate perhaps one of the most mysterious things to

have ever happened in the world. The birth of a baby, ordinary in so many ways - born to a couple of normal people from a normal town, born in the midst of the pain and mess of childbirth just like any other baby. But this one was different. This ordinary mystery of a new person coming into the world was foretold hundreds of years before it happened, and was heralded by prophets and angels, and sought out by shepherds and kings. Because this ordinary mystery of a new baby was something that had never happened before - because this baby brought God to earth.

The reading we heard a minute ago from the Gospel of John is a prologue - it's like the introduction to a film that sets the scene, and tells you what has happened up until this point, when the story starts. And John tells a classic story - of the wonderful creation of the world, but of good being intermingled with bad, light with darkness, and the world needing to be saved by someone special. Sound familiar? It's a story we like to tell over and over again in all kinds of different ways. Except this version happened to you and me.

The way John writes is beautiful, but it's also hard to understand, because what he's doing is using poetic language to try and describe something that is pretty

much indescribable. So 'The Word' here is Jesus, who was there with God when the universe was created, who breathed life into every living soul, and yet, who was born as a baby, just like every one of us here. So when John says simply, "the Word became flesh" – he is saying that God became one of us – the divine became human in order that humanity might share in the divine.

The whole reason that Jesus was born - the reason behind the prophets, angels, star, shepherds, kings and gifts, sheep and donkey, and Mary and Joseph in the stable - the reason is so that the world could be saved. Jesus came so that we could share in the divine, so that we could enter into the light of God's glory and love.

There's a Christmas song you might be familiar with, called 'Mary did you know', and I love one of the lines in it, where the singers wonder 'Mary, did you know, that your baby boy has walked where angels trod? And when you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God?' For heaven and earth have met tonight in the extraordinary mystery of this baby's birth.

I wonder what prompted you to be here this evening. Perhaps it's tradition, perhaps you love singing carols,

perhaps a family member dragged you along when you'd rather have been at the pub! Maybe you're seeking that elusive 'christmas feeling'. Maybe you aren't quite sure.

But what you can be sure to find here, is mystery. Once we've grown up, mystery can sometimes seem hard to come by. The prospect of Santa visiting isn't quite as thrilling. Presents may have become quite practical, rather than exciting - as my poor dad found out one year when it seemed everyone in the family had bought him socks, socks, and more socks! But here, this evening, as we welcome the first minutes of the new day, we find mystery, and wonder. The wonder of a newborn child, who brings with him both the mystery of birth and new life, but also brings the divine into the world to walk alongside us, to be one of us, and reconcile every one of us to God.

And the beautiful wonder of it is, that because God came to earth to meet us in humanity, we can come to God as we are - we don't have to try and be 'good enough' first, because we're not trying to tempt God down, or prove that we're worthy. God is already here. So, we are here. We have come.

Come as we are, expectant, waiting, excited, seeking, overwhelmed, empty, curious. Come as you are. Come with the shepherds and wise men, the animals, the

bright star overhead, the angels singing their hearts out in the heavens. Come as you are, and enter into the Christmas story, because tonight, the miracle has happened, the world has been saved. The baby has been born who brings God among us, and all is made new.

So let us step into this moment of wonder, and marvel with Mary, the new mother, whose kisses on the soft head of her baby are kisses of the divine.

Amen.