

Grace Episcopal Church
Christmas Day 2022
Rev Brian C Justice

Isaiah 52.7-10
Hebrews 1.1-12
Psalm 98
John 1.1-14

Christmas Day

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O come, O come, Emmanuel.
Amen.

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On this day – the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Christmas Day – we celebrate “the coming of Christ.”

We celebrate this in two senses.

In the first sense, we celebrate the coming of Christ in history.

That is, the birth of Jesus the Christ in Bethlehem to his parents Mary and Joseph. And this is the wild and wondrous mystery of the Incarnation, which is the foundational truth of the Christian faith. The divine life of God is fully revealed in the human life of Jesus.

God is incarnate in the life of Jesus. From the first fragile days of that infant child to the bold, brilliant words and actions of that adult master and mystic ... God is embodied, in-fleshed, incarnate in Jesus the Christ.

As John says in the Fourth Gospel (1.14), God “became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.” And, as John says in the Book of Revelation (21.3), “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as ... God.”

God is not just “out there” ... not just “after death” ... not distant, detached ... not reticent, removed ... not an “old man in the sky” ... not Zeus with a lightning bolt.

God is with us. That is what the name Emmanuel means. God with us.

So the full reality of God is here, now, in this world ...

among people and poinsettias,
among loaves of bread and letters in the mail,
among dogs and daycares,
among cats and cardinals and cloaks of delight,
among gifts and graces and glasses of wine.

God is with us.

In the second sense, we celebrate the coming of Christ in our hearts.

During the season of Advent we prepare a manger in our hearts in which Christ can be born.

And today, Christmas Day, he is born there.

In love.

Our life together in love ... that is Bethlehem. Your heart, my heart in love ... that is the manger.

And Christ is born this day among us, in this Bethlehem ... within you and within me, in this manger.

We have had work to do in Advent to prepare ourselves for this miracle: prayer, study, reading, reflection, worship.

But we do not do this on our own. We prepare our hearts for the birth of Christ by opening our hearts to others. To our families and friends ... to strangers and even to enemies.

We open our hearts in love, we let our heartbeat become one with heartbeat of others, with heartbeat of God.

One heart. One love.

And Christ is born ... in love ... in the manger of our hearts.

Then, in time with the heartbeat of the universe,
we join our voices with the choruses of the ages
who sing together the hymn

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas;
star and angels gave the sign.

Love shall be our token;
Love be yours and Love be mine;
Love to God and others,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Amen.