

January 4 2015

**Scripture Lessons ~**

*Luke 2:25-33, No. 128*

*John 1:1-18*

**Sermon**     *In the Beginning*

Those who were able to attend Bible Study groups during Advent discovered together that only Matthew and only Luke have the true birth stories about Jesus amongst the Gospels. Mark has absolutely nothing but John in the passage which Micki read for us this morning, does have a birth story of sorts which we have already heard bits and pieces of during our Christmas celebration. I think John starts his gospel off with the same three words with which the writer of Genesis starts the first verses of the first book of scripture. What are those three words? In the beginning. But John's beginning begins before the beginning of Jesus' birth. This begins even before the beginning of Genesis because John attempts to describe events that precede even the beginning of the creation of the world. Before the Christian faith became, what I would call an organized movement, if we can even call the Christian faith an organized movement anyway, one of the things that the early Christians struggled with was the question, that who this person Jesus was. Was Jesus a prophetic human being? Was Jesus a new kind of god that came upon the scene? Or was he something in between or was he someone who was unique or different in all of history up to that point. The apostles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century creed of their historic statement of the church reflected a part of the conclusion reached in this quest but John takes a stab at it in his Gospel which was written about a hundred AD.

Verses 1 through 18 in chapter 1 on John's Gospel was referred to as the prologue or really the introduction to John's Gospel. And in it John refers to Jesus again and again as the capital W WORD of God which in the Greek is the word logos as opposed to the small w word of God which is the scripture for the Bible. Without being too complicated or technical in Greek philosophy that word logos is the word for us meaning all encompassing, driving force, driving energy, the driving spirit moving behind all of created things. Jesus as this force, John is writing a kind of pre-birth story describing Jesus as existing before the beginning of the world and even of having a hand in the creation of the world. More than that John called Jesus an interesting thing, God called Jesus Life. God called Jesus Light in fact the light that the darkness cannot overcome; which is a very appropriate image for Epiphany and the very appropriate theme for that time for us as we experience the darkness of the weeks and months ahead. But how does Jesus

as that word even that creative word, Jesus is light, Jesus as light that overcomes the darkness speaks to that early church question about who Jesus was. Well, it was what pointed earlier Christians to one of the options that I mentioned before that Jesus was someone who was unique and different in all of history. Someone that people had never experienced before up to that point. So when John speaks of Jesus becoming flesh and living amongst us and coming to give the people of the world the power to become the children of God. He was saying for the entire world to see that this man was not a new god; that this man was not just a prophetic man; this person Jesus was not a strange hybrid between the two but this person was a person with a mission never before seen before in all of human history up until that point in the world.

As we enter the year 2015 then what do these ancient and strange words in John's Gospel, the Word, and Life, and Light and becoming flesh and children of God, have to tell us about our lives in the 21st century. I am going to be really honest with you and say I don't even pretend to understand that mysterious relationship that John points to between God and Jesus. I don't get it. It is there but I don't get it. But I do take the words in the beginning very seriously here. Somehow I know but I don't know how, that Jesus was with God in the beginning; somehow Jesus was present in the creation of the world in the beginning; somehow Jesus became flesh and gave people the power to become the children of God in the beginning. In the Beginning which is a new beginning, new beginning in the year 2015 Jesus gives us, I think, the same opportunity in our lives of faith to begin again as God's children and we are called by God to grasp that opportunity each new day of this brand new year upon which we embark in this month.

And what does it mean for us to be the children of God? One thing that I think it does not mean is that we have to have some type of privileged status to make us better than everybody else on this earth. Nor does it mean that we can rest on our laurels and soak up the golden goodies that God sends our way in the form of blessing. On the contrary if anything, to whom much is given, much is asked, and there is a lot to be done in this often broken and hurting and difficult world to shine the light of God's love in the dark corners of the creation; where there is a lot of want; where there is a lot of ignorance; where there is a lot of injustice; where there is a lot of downright arrogance; where there is a lot of greed; where there is a lot of prejudices. And as John tells us it will not do any longer for us to hide behind any kind of status as children of God but instead he calls upon us as children of God and I have this in big letters in my text-to shine. We are to shine as we embark on this adventure that we call 2015 Jesus' as God's Light calls upon us to be a smaller but just as effective light to shine the light of God's hope into the dark lives of so many other children of God that we encounter in this world every day.

So as John tells us in this passage, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.  
And together we say AMEN