

Hebrews 1:1-4; John 1:1-14

Grace to you and peace from God who was, who is, and who is to come. Amen.

Our gospel lesson this evening:

“In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

From today’s New York Times:

“*Gunmen Kill 28 on a Bus in Honduras. Street Gangs Are Blamed.* Gunmen thought to be street-gang members open fire at a city bus in Honduras on Thursday night, killing 28 people including four children who were on their way home from work and last-minute Christmas shopping.”

“*US Can Beat the Insurgents, Rumsfeld Tells the Troops.* ‘Iraq looks bleak and is a tough situation, but there is no question that the United States will prevail over insurgents,’ Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told troops on a Christmas Eve visit to several hostile Iraqi regions three days after a bombing in Mosul that killed 18 Americans.”

“*In Mid-west, Stranded Travelers.* Much of the mid-west spent Friday digging out from a winter storm that left motorists stranded, airports snarled, and power lines down and Christmas deliveries delayed. Snow continued to fall in some of the affected areas which stretch from Texas, across Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, to Ohio. Police officers, Red Cross workers, and National Guard troops came to the rescue of hundreds of drivers and thousands of housebound families.”

“*\$6.3 Million to Be Paid to Settle Abuse Case.* The Christian Brothers, a Roman Catholic religious order, agreed to pay 6.3 million to settle lawsuits brought by three former students who were sexually abused by faculty members at an elite boys’ school the order runs in Northern California, the plaintiffs lawyers and victim advocacy group said yesterday.”

“In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

They don’t really seem to jive, do they – these headlines of happenings around the world and this scripture. Where is God in killing 28 women and children? Where is God in a suicide bomber coming onto a base? Where is God in the abuse of children? And yet, our scripture tells us that God has been here from the beginning. “A light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (Vs. 5) It would be really hard to convince some of those families, I’m sure, who have lost loved ones in Honduras or Iraq, or those who have possibly perished in the snow storms of the mid-west, that there is indeed light in the darkness that has suddenly descended upon them, especially this holiday season. And yet, our scripture says that Christ came into the world. More importantly, that Christ came into the world and was not consumed by the hatred and the malice and the pettiness and the bickering that we humans are just so good at. I know, at the very least in my household this morning, we heard little bickerings because things were not quite equally distributed between two boys. And that’s just so little. Where is God in the little? Where is God in the headlines?

And yet, as we keep reading through the opening verses of John’s gospel, we get to verse 14 as we heard Zach read to us tonight, “The Word became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory. The

glory of a Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

The word that we heard translated as, "lived among us," this wonderful Greek word which really has its roots in the word "tented." Tented, as in tenting, as in camping; as in God came down to the world and planted his tent next to us. And every time we get up and move, God picks up that tent and walks with us. When we stop, God stops and puts that tent there. God is with us when we're at work. God is with us when we get up and go to school. God is with us when we're at home. God is with us in the supermarkets. The Word became flesh and tented among us. God is with us wherever we go.

Now, in that tenting with us, in that camping with us, God doesn't say that everything is going to be okay. God never says "human beings will never strive to kill each other simply because I am with you." God has never promised that we'll always have money to pay our bills, that we will always get along with our spouse, that we will never be sick, diagnosed with a terminal illness.

What we hear in John's gospel tonight, what we celebrate in the birth of this child, Jesus, is that in all that happens to us, God is there with us. It doesn't mean that it will be easy. But it does mean that when we cry, God cries with us. When we rejoice, God rejoices with us. When we need someone to lean upon, God is there. And God provides us support. God gives us friends, believers, fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. For in all that we do, God is there. God is in our beginning. God is in our live. God is in our ending, too.

But, as we celebrate this day, as this day soon comes to an end, that does not mean that God stops being with us. Rather, God continues through this day, through this night, through tomorrow morning and day and night and onward, until we are all joined together again to be with God in the final eternity. And that's the promise that we take forth. It is in that promise of the resurrection, it is in that promise of God's presence with us always, that we bear today with the birth of this Son. It is that promise that we celebrate in the bread and the wine. In that promise let us go forth in God's grace and peace this night remembering that we are never alone, for God is with us. God has become flesh and dwells with us – always. Amen.

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