



“Stir Up Our World”

Fourth Sunday in Advent
Saturday & Sunday, December 22–23, 2018
All Services
The Reverend John H. Brock
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:39-55

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

Last Saturday, driving to church, when a show I like to listen to called *Radiolab* came on. This program usually talks about science-y topics. They were doing a repeat show called “Beyond Time.” The host began with a short explanation of an art installation in the J. Hood Wright Park, which is in the Washington Heights neighborhood in upper Manhattan. This art work, erected in 1974, is called *3000 A.D. Diffusion Piece*. It is a forty-foot-high column made of aluminum and filled with magnesium. The primary *point* of the installation is that the metals are slowly *fusing* together.

What the artist, Terry Fugate-Wilcox, wants to achieve, is for this column to, *eventually*, become one solid chunk of metal. He got the original idea several years ago, when he learned about a tomb that was discovered in Egypt in 1968. One of the many items found inside was a cube of gold bars and lead bricks, stacked together. Except, they were no longer separate bars. Over the course of time (archeologists figured around 5,000 years), it had become **one solid** pile. There were no indistinguishable bars. It was one complete block of metal. Terry said that, on a molecular level, the layers of differing metal had become one. That became his vision for this column: for two different metals to become *indistinguishable* one from the other. Only, it's going to take a *little* bit of time. That's why the name: 3000 A.D.

In our gospel reading, we get something equally amazing: God became one of us. Not simply showing up on earth one day, looking completely like an adult human, saying, *Hey, look everybody! Here I am! Surprise!* That's the way Vishnu or Zeus or Thor, those “minor” gods, would do it.

No. The Lord God went through the whole human process: ovum impregnated; fetus gestated; infant born. God intermingled, intertwined, **fused** with the human genome on an atomic level. God so **willingly** became one of us, that when teenaged Mary went to spend time with her pregnant, older, cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth's baby - who we *later* learn is the John the Baptizer - little John, upon simply hearing the voice of his cousin's mother, **Leapt** for joy within his own mother's womb. And Elizabeth *herself* became so filled with the Spirit of God, that she exclaimed:

"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

God *stirred up*, **first** in unborn John, and **then** in John's mother, the joy, the excitement, the wonderment, of the Lord God Almighty becoming actual flesh. And **remember** all that John will accomplish: He brings the message of repentance to **all** people of his day.

On Christmas Eve, with the reading of Luke 2, we'll hear how the *first* people to learn of The Christ's birth were *not* the religious leaders, were not the faith healers, were not the rich, the powerful, the movers and shakers, all of the people you would expect to be the recipients of such news. The very *first* people to learn of the birth of the Messiah were pretty much what were considered to be the dregs of society: shepherds. Dirty, smelly, always on the move, never to be trusted, shepherds. Definitely NOT the people we would expect to stir up the world in a positive manner. Nor would we expect them to be the first to be given news of The Christ.

And who, then, *eventually* shows up to offer homage? Foreigners. Astrologers. *Aliens*. The Magi. From the East, no less! Iraq, Iran, and modern-day Afghanistan. Again, **NOT** the people we would expect, nor from the place we would think of to stir up the world in a positive manner with the news of the birth of **The Christ child**.

Yet the Spirit of God did so stir up that first century world, that the rejects of society, as well as people from *hundreds* of miles away, people who were probably not even really *aware* of the followers of YHWH, they came, in awe and in wonder. They **knew** something monumental had happened, that something *unique* to that time and place; something that *had not happened* ever before.

The last time I gave the message, I talked about how God is with us in everything that happens to us, in the good and in the lousy. God is there, walking along with us, living with us. In John's gospel on Christmas morning, we'll hear that lesson that says, "The Word ἔσκηνωσεν (*eskonosen*) with us." In English that's translated
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

eskonosen is Greek and means to dwell, to tent, to tabernacle. A literal translation of the Greek (and this is one of the many reasons you should learn scriptural Greek) is
And the Logos became flesh, and tabernacled among us.

Tabernacle - that's the place where the Israelites believed that God lives. You remember the story of the people of Israel leaving Egypt on their way to the promised land. They built the tabernacle as a place of worship, and as the place where the Spirit of God dwelt among them. Every time they set up camp, they set up the tabernacle. And every time they moved, the tabernacle came with them. God traveled with them from place to place to place.

The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us.
God became one with us. Not simply one **of** us; God became one **with** us.

Like those lead and gold bars in the Egyptian tomb, Or the aluminum and magnesium column in Washington Heights. With Jesus' birth, God became fused with us, intimately;

intricately; intrinsically. That's why the child within Elizabeth *leapt* for joy upon hearing Mary's voice; he knew, with his entire, tiny, growing, being, that he was in the presence of his Lord, even though Jesus was still in his own mother's womb.

Sisters and Brothers: **That** is how we are called to live - we are called to live as though we are **one** with Gd. We are called to *lift up* one another. We are called to *help* those who are in need, regardless of how they came to need that help.

I don't care what your political affiliation is; I'm not concerned about your ethnic heritage or the pigmentation of your skin. I'm not interested in what kind of car you drive or how much money you do or do not have, whether you like beer or wine or Mountain Dew. What *matters*, what is *important*, is how we *treat* one another **in Christ's name**; what *matters* is how we strive to *live out* the calling of our baptism; what is *critical* is how we allow God to **use us** to stir up this world, how we allow God to *fuse* with us. Only, for us, that fusing does NOT take 1,495 years, like it will for Terry Wilcox's column. For us, to fuse with God, it has already happened at the waters of our baptism.

So, what have **you** done with that infusion of God? What will **you** do with God so intimately a part of your life? God used a pregnant, teenaged girl, from the backwaters of the greatest empire the world had ever seen up until that time, to start all this. God can use you.

How are you going to let God stir up your life, so that you can stir up our world?

Amen.

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