

Christmas Reflections 2012
December 24, 2012, 9:00 P.M.
John 1:1-5

Christmas greetings to you again: “Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those who he favors!” The time of waiting is finally over! Our Messiah, the baby Jesus has been born to us this night. God himself incarnated the human being in the birth of baby Jesus! Can we fully understand this mystery in our human knowledge?

You may want to ask a question to God why the Prince of Peace and Mighty God had to be laid in a manger. It looks too weak, vulnerable and somewhat pathetic. It doesn't seem to have any power to save us. The Gospel of John uses a metaphor to explain the incarnation of God by comparing it with the contrast between darkness and light. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Other Bible versions paraphrase our Scripture reading in this way: “Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!—came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. **The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.**”

St. Augustine meditated on the meaning of Christ Jesus as light. When light enters into the darkness, darkness disappears. He doesn't believe that darkness coexists with light, but it doesn't mean we fight darkness either. He argues that darkness is simply the state of absence of light. When our world is so dark where the power of evil seems to be too powerful and strong to dominate us, it is because there has been no light in the darkness. Jesus Christ came to us as light and the light of Christ will brighten the darkness of our lives and world. Jesus Christ, Light of the lights will rekindle us and spread our lights and send forth to every corner of darkness in this world. In this sense, we are reflections of Christ Jesus, the Light of the lights. The faith that we accept Jesus Christ, believe as our New Messiah is a humble confession that we decide to belong to the light, not to the power of darkness.

Imagine the place of a stable in a cold winter. What does it mean that our Messiah, our Savior was born in such a humble and unsanitary place? I guess that the stable was not a good place for Mary to deliver a baby. A stable is actually a place where animals are kept. There must be bad smells, flies or unsanitary things around there. It wasn't a right place for the newborn baby to stay. But there was no choice. This space of stable, virgin Mary (a teenager but

she was pregnant before marriage, not expecting a baby. Can we understand her real life struggles, her fears and anxieties?) Can we understand Joseph's responsibility and loneliness in this difficult time? All the situations, stable, baby delivery, Mary and Joseph represents our life struggles, fears, uncertain future and our vulnerable human predicament. These may be the symbols of shadows in our lives. But the cold and smelly and unsanitary environment couldn't stop the birth of baby Jesus. Mother Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger. It is the same to our lives as well. We are still sometimes cold and fearful, certainly poor in many ways. We often feel we have no place and are unclear about what God wants of us. But the Lord Jesus was born in us today. Darkness couldn't put out the light-light.

The early church taught Christians to look for the Light coming onto the world at the darkest time of the year (the winter solstice). In this way, they would celebrate Jesus' birth and candles were used to signify Christ as light of the world. In this beautiful night, we would remember and celebrate the light of the world in the baby Jesus. Christ Jesus, light is born to us. To welcome and accept Jesus Christ is to ignite Christ in our hearts. And let Christ light shine darkness in us. We take Christ light to places where darkness powerfully dominates us in our lives. Christ light brings us hope, in the place of despair, and joy instead of sorrow.

Long years ago, I heard a story about a small and rural church in Europe. This church has a unique worship tradition. The congregation members are asked to bring their own candles for lighting the sanctuary instead of electric lights. In the end of each service, the minister reminds people that each of them is a small light of the world. He continues to say, "As we experience here at our service that we miss one less person this Sunday, the sanctuary became much darker than last Sunday. You are the light of the world. If you bring your light up to the darkness of the world, the world will become much brighter than now. Go forth and bring your light into the every corner of darkness in this world."

We are all invited to be small lights of Christ Jesus. And our church is also commissioned to be the reflection of light to our community and world. May the Light of Christ shine in your hearts.