



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Christmas (A,B,C) – Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]

Focus: *The Word Became Flesh*

word of life

“He (Jesus) is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.” (Hebrews 1:3)

Read Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]

A blessed Christmas to you! Today we celebrate the birth of the Savior. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke proclaim the familiar story of Jesus’ birth.

1. *What does this birth mean to you?*
2. *What difference does it make to the world?*

In our reading from Hebrews, we hear the unique significance of that birth for the world. Throughout the ages, God’s word has been spoken in a variety of ways through messengers (prophets). The messengers were faithful, yet the message was incomplete. But in the birth we celebrate at Christmas, God speaks – this time through his Son. In lofty and poetic phrases, the writer proclaims the Son as the “reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being.” (vs. 3)

It is interesting to note that the name “Jesus” is never mentioned in the verses assigned for today’s reading. The writer uses “Son” – a royal title implying a direct lineage to the Parent. The regal nature of the Son is further expressed in the verses that follow (Hebrews 1:5-8) where verses from the Old Testament are used as evidence to confirm the royal significance of the Son.

3. *Compare Psalms 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; and Hebrews 1:5.*
Compare Psalm 45:6-7 and Hebrews 1:8.
4. *What is the significance of the writer of Hebrews quoting verses from 2 Samuel and the Psalms?*

The Greek word translated “exact imprint” is found only here (Hebrews 1:3) in the New Testament. Like a coin in ancient times bore the imprint of the king, so too does the Son bear the imprint of the glory of the Father. When we look at the Christ, we see the very essence of God.

Note the similarity of these verses from Hebrews to those from the first chapter of John. Have someone read John 1:1-14 (which is the Gospel reading for Christmas Day) while the rest of the group looks at the assigned verses for today from Hebrews.

5. *What similarities do you see?*
6. *How are the two texts different?*

Similar themes echo in the two readings when viewed side by side:

- * The Word of God (God spoke through the prophets, in the beginning was the Word) has creative power and is central.
- * The Son is the embodiment of the Word.
- * All things are created through Him.
- * He reflects the glory of God.

In eloquent phrases, the author of Hebrews professes the Son as God’s Word – God’s final word – spoken in the Word-become-flesh.

word among us

The little girl hadn't been in church before. Her parents weren't the "church-going" type. But that Christmas eve, the mother wanted to experience the true meaning of Christmas. She got her daughter ready, and together they went to a church in their neighborhood.

The building was filled with candles and the smell of evergreens. The mother and daughter sang the Christmas carols with the congregation – the melodies were familiar from the music played in the mall.

There was a time in the service for the children to come forward for the children's message. The little girl bravely walked down the long center aisle to the step where the pastor was seated. Beside them was a crèche with an infant child in the manger. The girl listened intently as the pastor told the Christmas story.

As the girl walked back to her mother, she excitedly proclaimed, "Mom, there is a baby in the wooden box. And guess who the baby is? The baby is God!"

1. *How do we tell the Christmas story?*
2. *Would someone unfamiliar with the story have a similar revelation: "the baby is God"?*
3. *What are some of the Christmas traditions in your congregation?*
4. *How do those traditions help tell the story of "the Word made flesh"?*

"The baby is God!" The event we celebrate on Christmas is not just about the exchanging of gifts or the singing of familiar carols. It's not just about a baby's birth; it's about the birth of One who reflects the glory of God, One who is the imprint of God's very being, the Son of the Father, the Word made flesh, the One who comes into our darkness and our brokenness and shines God's radiant love. "Yes, the baby is God!" Thanks be to God!

5. *In what ways do you experience God coming into your life?*

faith practice in daily life

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

The One whose presence we celebrate at Christmas has yet another name: Prince of Peace. The birth of Christ is the promised coming of peace – not only a time without war – but a lasting shalom and wholeness where there is right relations for those who are estranged and justice for the all who are oppressed. The celebration of the Word made flesh really becomes our call to strive for justice and peace in our families, our faith communities, our neighborhoods, and in all the earth.

6. *How can we take the message of Christmas – "the baby is God" – and express it as peacemakers in our world?*

Prayer

O God, you are the Word made flesh. We thank you for coming to us. Guide us, so that in all we do, we might proclaim your coming and embody your justice and peace. Amen

last word

Share with someone this week
the Christmas story.