

God Gives God's Word

December 25, 2016

John 1:1-14

You may know Madeleine L'Engle as the award-winning author of *A Wrinkle in Time*. But she wrote dozens of books, short stories, essays and articles during her career. We use excerpts from her writing as part of our breakfast time daily devotions. Last Monday, we read these words:

“When was the last time anybody asked you, ‘Do I have your word?’ Or when was the last time anybody said to you, ‘I give you my word, absolutely’? How many times in the last few decades have we watched and listened to a political figure on television and heard him [*sic*] say, ‘I give you my word...’ and shortly thereafter that word has been proven false. In the past year alone, how many people have perjured themselves publicly? Sworn on the Bible, given their word, and that word has been a lie? Words of honor are broken casually today, a though they don't matter.”

“Small wonder that when God tells us, ‘I give you my Word,’ few people take him [*sic*] seriously.”

L'Engle first published those words in 1993. Things seem not to have improved much. Then she draws the conclusion that makes all the difference.

“‘I give you my Word,’ said God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.”¹

God gives us God's Word. That's the good news today. We Christians do not celebrate “Christmas.” We do not celebrate a pagan orgy of self-absorbed commercialism. We celebrate the Festival of the Incarnation. **God gives us God's Word.** And that Word comes in person.

Isn't that precisely what we want? I remember one of the great scenes from Paul Newman's classic film, *Cool Hand Luke*. In the middle of a thunderstorm Luke yells up to the thunder and lightning, addressing God, "Let me know you're up there. Come on. Love me, hate me, kill me, anything. Just let me know it." John's assertion lurks in the background, not just of this film but of our lives.

God gives us God's Word.

God's promise to be with God's people wherever we go. The dwelling of God is a deeply intimate, personal claim and assumes God's commitment to and continuity with God's people. In the Word made flesh and dwelling among us, now God not only goes where God's people go, but is who they are. That is, God now dwells with us by taking on our form, our humanity. This “different” dwelling of God is God being where God's people are, and now who God's people are.

God gives us God's Word. That means that our God is the God who shows up.

Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know about their hardships. Often he dressed in the clothes of a working man or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited thought that he was their ruler.

One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!"

The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the coarse food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!"

God is willing to make most any accommodation to have fellowship with us. Even becoming human. **God gives us God's Word.**

God shows up in us and through us. Howard Thurman's wonderful poem "The Work of Christmas" might be a fit accompaniment to our reading today:

“When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.”ⁱⁱ

The work of Christmas begins when God shows up. **God gives us God's Word.**

Let's pray...

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ⁱ Madeleine L'Engle, *Glimpses of Grace*, pages 324-325 (first published in *The Rock That is Higher: Story as Truth*).

ⁱⁱ Quoted by David Lose, <http://www.davidlose.net/2014/12/christmas-2-b-christmas-continued/>.