

Shocked by Christmas – John 1:1

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus who is the Christ child. Amen

Were you shocked by Christmas? Maybe you were shocked by the business of Christmas, maybe you were shocked by the money you spent on Christmas, maybe you'll be shocked by the weight you gained during Christmas, maybe you were shocked by the number of events you attended during Christmas. BUT, were you shocked by Christmas?

Were you shocked by the event of Christmas? Did the event of God coming to earth through a baby born in a manger catch you off guard? Did the whole event which we celebrate during this time, the event of God coming to earth for your salvation; did that event penetrate your senses, your emotions? Did the Christmas event bring home the point that God loves you and through the baby born in the manger has invaded your life now and in the future? Were you shocked by this invasion of God into your life? Were you overwhelmed that the all-powerful God, the God who created everything there is and that is yet to come, invaded your life, your common ordinary life with his powerful message of love??

I hope you were shocked by Christmas, but I have the sad feeling many were not. They were shocked by all the events of Christmas, but the message of Christmas did not penetrate into the core of their lives with its message of love. For many, the coming and going of Christmas meant nothing; it was and is business as usual.

Maybe we need again to find the faith, the innocence of youth to understand the shocking, overwhelming experience which we celebrate at Christmas? Maybe all of us need to be like the boy in the following story:

"A boy was walking home and a neighbor noticed his zig-zag path which took him from one miracle of God's creation to another. He asked, 'Where are you going?'

"Oh, I've been to Sunday School,' the boy answered, "I have learned a lot about God.

The neighbor who was very cynical concerning religion said, 'That is a mighty fine way for a boy to spend his time. If you'll tell me where God is, I'll give you a brand new dime.'

Quick as a flash the boy answered, ' I'll give you a dollar, Mister, if you'll tell me where God ain't."

That boy understood the shocking news of Christmas which says God through this event has invaded history, our history, for the rest of eternity. God has come to earth and plans to stay with us for the duration. The promise of Christmas is that God is not only found in nature, but in each of us as He works in us and through us to bring His will of love to earth.

Our lessons this morning speak to this God who came to earth, who shocked us at Christmas with his glorious presence. Christmas is indeed a shocking time, because God came to earth to be with us.

A poem says it well, "The light of God surrounds me;.....The love of God enfolds me.....The power of God protects me;.....The presence of God watches over me....Where ever I am, God is...."

Christmas is a shocking experience because of God. We are shocked by Christmas because God invaded our lives. He invaded our lives to redeem us, to transform us, to adopt us once and for all as His children.

One of the more unique toys that were sold many years ago were Go-bots. The toys which can be folded into many different shapes. They are fascinating to watch. But what is more fascinating is the transformation, the changing of our lives because of the Christmas experience. Because of Christmas, you and I are changed, we are transformed into people who have been covered with God's robe of righteousness.

We have been made children of God as God invaded our lives and sought to transform us to adopt us because of His great love for us. God went to great lengths to make us His. He went so far as to become one of us, to take on our nature, so that we might take on His nature. So that we might become like Him.

A story which appears in the Augsburg sermon series says: "A couple traveled across the country so that they might adopt a child. They traveled to where a group of children from an orphanage were being adopted. When they arrived, there was one little boy left. He was a 5 year old bashful, shy, funny-looking and awkward boy. He was adopted by this couple who poured all of their love into him. He said later, 'I wouldn't have chosen them to live with, but they chose me, and it was greater than I could ever have imagined. I was chosen, I was a very wanted child."

In the same way, each of us are a very wanted child in God's eyes. He chose us, he became like one of us so that we might fully comprehend his love for us, and he invaded our lives so that we might be transformed by this great love. Christmas shocked us because at this event we are overwhelmed by unconditional love. We are shocked by Christmas because in this event we encounter love, love which is so great, so encompassing, so unconditional that it takes our breath away.

As we experience God's love in the waters of Baptism, in the eating and drinking of bread and wine, we also experience that same love in the smile of someone who loves us unconditionally.

Because God came to earth as a baby born in a manger, because God brought love to earth through Jesus Christ, He still comes to us through earthen vessels, through water, through wine, through bread, through a forgiving smile, through an understanding smile, through an accepting smile, through your smile, through your love for someone, someone you love with no strings attached, someone you love period.

"A man in a hospital experienced this kind of love, a love he had not known before. This love made him think about his life and made him seriously look at what life was all about. One day he said to the chaplain, 'I am beginning to see what life is all about. I saw it in the nurses who cared for me those 3 days and nights, and in my parents who never left my side. I've seen it in the

faces of the people who have come to visit. I've seen it in those other people who forgave me for what I did to their car and for the hurt I caused them. I guess I've found what life is all about by looking at people who already know. And what I saw was love. A love which accepts me for what I am and who I am. A Love which upholds and surrounds me. I know what life is, chaplain. Life is love, the love of God through Christ instilled in each life."

But for many, this Christmas event has been lost by all the shocking events of Christmas. Christmas is so simple that it is for many so difficult to accept.

John says it well in our Gospel lesson: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;"

It is so simple yet so difficult. Christmas is the event of God's love coming; breaking into our world, yet so many cannot see it because they have not opened their eyes to his shining light.

Light has been for centuries the sign of hope, the longing for escape from the darkness of despair and the sign of deliverance for many. Yet, the light of Christ, the light of grace, the light which the Christmas event brings, the light we celebrate at the Epiphany, the light of the star is missed by so many.

Many are searching, are seeking for a light, a sign of hope amidst their world of darkness.

Isaac Asimov says this: "If you were a primitive person waiting through a long night; if it were dark and chilly with no source of light and heat but perhaps a smoldering campfire; if you could hear the rustling noises that might mean predatory animals that could see far better in the dark than you could; if you could sleep no more--what would be the greatest sign, the greatest hope in your life?"

It would have to be the soft graying of the sky in the east, the brightening of the dawn, which brought the sure promise that, in a short while, poking above the horizon would come the sun itself to make the world light and secure again."

Isn't that the light of Christmas? The Christmas light that breaks the cold darkness of our lives. Isn't that what we celebrate at this time of year?

Christmas shocks us because it is simple yet so profound. Christmas shocks us because a new light has come into the world, a light of unconditional love which God brings to us and asks us to share with others.

Christmas is a shocking experience because of Jesus. Amen.