

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, Amen

We are all children of God. That's the message .Today's gospel tells us that God's intention is for all creation, all humankind to bask in the loving grace which is at the heart of the mystery of life. John is harking back to Genesis and God's original blessing on a world with which God was very well pleased. The theologian, Matthew Fox, feels Western churches lead us astray by majoring on original sin, and prefers Eastern Orthodox churches with their emphasis on original blessing.

Today's Christmas gospel flows over with blessing and poetry and mystery. Unpicking and over- analysing John's prologue is missing the point - God's grace can't be dissected and catalogued . It is too overwhelming. John tells us that Grace is God. Grace is the very presence of God at the heart of the mystery of the trinity. John tells us

before there was anything at all, God, spoke in love and that love within the Trinity overflowed into creation.

We are all children of God through the Son.This is the culmination of all God's dealings with the world, the goal of the Creator and creation.

Everything else in John's gospel depends on this **“the Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of the gift which is truth.”**

The gospel stories will go on to teach us to see God's glory in the way Jesus lived amongst us , and to teach us to be able to respond to Jesus today through feeding hungry people , visiting prisoners, ,sheltering the homeless. Seeing God's glory is to listen to refugees knocking and to open our doors to them, to keep on seeing Jesus in disguise. Mystery and practicality coexist. Contemplation and Action ,as Richard Rohr has it, are both needed.

John, just decades after Jesus the man lived and died, is speaking of the Christ in startling poetic terms, telling us that the incarnation is far more amazing than we can comprehend.

Light, preceding Creation, the Word, the cause, reason and purpose of all things, banishing the darkness. Our response to this mystery has to be one of silence being **“lost in wonder, love and praise.”**

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians is as poetic as John, in his jubilation at God's grace poured out heedlessly and abundantly on all people. In the overwhelming generosity of the Holy Trinity all creation is declared to be loved and redeemed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is nothing now that can escape or resist God's reconciling plan, and that includes any forces or powers that may worry and threaten us.

The response Paul calls forth from us is praise. A life of praise, through silence, words and actions, is the life to which we are called, because it is where God intends to bring the whole cosmos.

Ephesians is a letter about living together in the midst of human differences. Paul writes as a Jew to a largely Gentile audience with the message that in Christ God has **“made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us”**

The salvation of Gentile Christians through Christ has been a part of God's plan from the beginning of creation. This is **“the mystery of God's will”**. In the first-century, this was an important lesson for Gentile Christians. The status of Jews as God's sole people prior to the coming of Christ

had raised questions about God's fairness to and love for all people. This passage assures people throughout the ages that we are part of God's plan all along.

God's ultimate plan **"for the fullness of time"** is **"to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth."** As children of God in the midst of current loss and grief and confusion we are to hold on to the Christmas message of faith, hope and superabundant love.

Amen