

God With Us
John 1:1-14
Christmas Day
Deacon Nina Joygaard, Preaching

Merry Christmas, dear friends in Christ.

May the peace of Christ settle with you in this season of celebration of God Immanuel. God-among-us.

I have only attended a handful of Christmas Day service in my life! In all the congregations that I have attended, or worked at – Christmas Eve has been the time for celebrating and Christmas Day was open for family or holiday time. But every-so-often, Christmas Day falls on a Sunday and we gather to celebrate God coming among us in vulnerability.

The scriptures we use on Christmas Eve are theatrical & dramatic. Expectant Mary traveling in the late-stages of pregnancy. An over-packed village. Stables and farm animals. Shepherds and angels and Magi and mangers. Singing and a clear starry night. There is mystery, and silence, and the twinkle of the night stars and holy candles in our worship services.

For Christmas Day – well, I'm not really sure what we expect... I honestly can't remember leading ... or even attending a Christmas Day service in the past. What do we expect? ... Singing I suppose. Christmas is really only 12 calendar days, so we try hard to squeeze in all of those beloved songs. What do you expect? ...

Community perhaps? Gathering with those for whom the power of this story is THE MOST important thing about Christmas. Well, friends look around. Here we are.

The splendor of Christmas Eve in the darkness of winter night is one thing. Revisiting that glory in the hopeful start of a new day is also pretty spectacular. Look around at the light coming into the world. If you're looking for more of the Christmas feels – I think this is the right place.

Our gospel lesson for today has a very different tenor than for Christmas Eve. It would be very difficult to stage John 1 as a play for children. Instead of the visceral

experience of barns and births – we have this very different origin story of Jesus. A story in which Jesus existed from the very beginning. A story that reminds us that Jesus, as the “word” was part of the plan from the outset and involved in ALL of creation – not just surrounded by it in a stable. A story that is not so much about the ‘birth’ of Jesus – but about the Jesus who has **existed** from the dawn of time doing a new thing. Coming among us. “Immanuel”, in Hebrew. God With Us.

The world-upside-down story of God putting on flesh and dwelling among us. The language here alludes back to the story of the Israelites tenting throughout the wilderness on their journey to the promised land. And God goes among them – wherever they go. God’s tent moves and lives with theirs.

And so it is for us this Christmas Day. We are reminded this day of something unexpected, topsy-turvy, and miraculous. The God of all Creation -- taking on real flesh and bone. God taking on vulnerability. God coming into our world. Into our midst. Into our lives.

And going with us wherever we go. God with us in our loud, chaotic, busy family gatherings.

God with us in the unexpected & unwanted silences.

God with us in our joy and celebration.

God with us in our loneliness and grief.

God with us physically gathering in this worship space.

God with us assembled in our pajamas around our traditional Christmas brunch at home.

God with us in airports and warming shelters. Working overtime and bed-ridden.

God goes with us. God goes with you.

In this Christmas celebration – through the powerful songs & community & scripture passages & gatherings --- may we SEE & HEAR & FEEL the presence of the divine among us. In goodness. In lovingkindness. In holiness & glory.

God’s presence is poured out among us this day, dear friends. Hold out your hands to receive.

Amen.