

Christmas and New Year Blessings!

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READINGS: John 1:1-14, again, with emphasis on the "Light" references. Also, you may want to read Luke 2:1-20 again, and Matthew 1:18-2:12 as well. Notice the Matthean and Lukan references to "Light" (Star & Angels).

"LIGHT" THOUGHT OF THE WEEK: In watching "Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer" a few weeks ago, it occurred to me that Rudolph has a lot to teach us. The LIGHT of Rudolph is what makes him stand out and makes him special, and it is also his GIFT to the world. He wants to hide that LIGHT (under a bushel basket, perhaps?) and keep people from noticing. That LIGHT was given to him at birth, it is just who he is. He tries to deny its existence, and when that's not possible, he runs away. Why? Because other people don't appreciate the LIGHT, and they use it as a way to make fun of Rudolph and treat him as "weird." They don't understand or appreciate what kind of GIFT his LIGHT can be. But Santa finally figures it out, and calls that GIFT of LIGHT into use for EVERYONE, FOR OTHERS. As a result, joy is shared and blessings abound... and Rudolph finds his true calling. He's a Light-Bearer, which helps him be a Joy-Sharer (Something he had always hoped and dreamed of being!)

SO...

The LIGHT that God, through Jesus, shines in our lives is the LIGHT that lives within us and gives us life to begin with. It has been there since birth, and it is called out through Baptism and our life together that we call "faith" and "church" and "spirituality" and "religion."

God needs us to be Santas, who call out and encourage others to use their God-given GIFTS OF LIGHT for others... and... God needs us to be Rudolphins, who trust God enough to employ our LIGHT-GIVING GIFTS for the blessing and helping of others, no matter how "weird" it may seem to some.

It's exactly what God has always hoped and dreamed for our being.

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CHRISTMAS POEM FOR PRAYER & REFLECTION...

Last year I shared a poem with FLC that I had received through email. It is a "theological poem" written as a joint effort of a theologian (John Shelby Spong) and a poet (Lucy Newton Boswell Negus). Here it is once again, something we consider a worthy Christmas tradition. We hope you enjoy it, and spend some time with it prayerfully in the weeks ahead. This poem was most recently published in a paperback coffee-table size version by St. Johann Press in Haworth, New Jersey, and is available through Amazon.com.

This will be the last Book of Faith email for 2009. We look forward to continuing the journey with you "next year."

-- Pastor Jay & Pastor Charlie

CHRISTPOWER

Far back beyond the beginning,
stretching out into the unknowable,
incomprehensible,
unfathomable depths, dark and void
of infinite eternity behind all history,
the CHRISTPOWER was alive.

This was the living
bursting, pulsing
generating, creating
smoldering, exploding
fusing, multiplying
emerging, erupting
pollenating, inseminating
heating, cooling
power of life itself:

CHRISTPOWER

And it was good!

Here
all things that we know
began their journey into being.

Here
light separated from darkness.

Here
CHRISTPOWER began to take form.

Here
life became real,
and that life spread into
emerging new creatures

evolving

into ever higher intelligence.

There was a sacrifice here

and

a mutation there.

There was grace and resurrection appearing

in their natural order,

occurring, recurring,

and always driven by the restless,

creating,

energizing

life force of God, called the CHRISTPOWER,

which flowed in the veins of every living thing

for ever

and ever

and ever

and ever.

And it was good!

In time, in this universe,

there emerged creatures who were called human,

and the uniqueness of these creatures

lay in that they could

perceive

this life-giving power.

They could name it

and embrace it

and grow with it

and yearn for it.

Thus human life was born,

but individual expressions of that human life
were marked with a sense of
incompleteness,
inadequacy,
and a hunger
that drove them ever beyond the self
to search for life's secret
and
to seek the source of life's power.

This was a humanity that could not be content with
anything less.

And once again
in that process
there was
sacrifice and mutation,
grace and resurrection
now in the human order,
occurring, recurring

And it was good!

Finally, in the fullness of time,
within that human family,

one
unique and special human life appeared:

whole
complete

free

loving

living

being

at one

at peace

at rest.

In that life was seen with new intensity

that primal power of the universe,

CHRISTPOWER

And it was good!

Of that life people said: Jesus,

you are *the* Christ,

for in you we see

and feel

and experience

the living force of life

and love

and being

of God.

He was hated,

rejected,

betrayed,

killed,

but

he was never distorted.

For here was a life in which

the goal, the dream, the hope

of all life

is achieved.

A single life among many lives.

Here

among us, out from us,

and yet this power, this essence,
was not from us at all,
for the CHRISTPOWER that was seen in Jesus
is finally of God.

And even when the darkness of death overwhelmed him,
the power of life resurrected him;

for CHRISTPOWER is life
eternal,
without beginning,
without ending.

It is the secret of creation.

It is the goal of humanity.

Here in this life we glimpse

that immortal

invisible

most blessed

most glorious

almighty life-giving force

of this universe

in startling completeness

in a single person.

Men and women tasted the power that was in him

and they were made whole by it.

They entered a new freedom,

a new being.

They knew resurrection and what it means to live

in the Eternal Now.

So they became agents of that power,

sharing those gifts from generation to generation,

creating and re-creating,
transforming, redeeming,
making all things new.

And as this power moved among human beings,

light

once more separated from darkness.

And it was good!

They searched for the words to describe

the moment that recognized the fullness of this power

living in history,

living in the life of this person.

But words failed them.

So they lapsed into poetry:

When this life was born,

they said,

a great light split the dark sky.

Angelic choruses peopled the heavens

to sing of peace on earth.

They told of a virgin mother,

of shepherds compelled to worship,

of a rejecting world that had no room in the inn.

They told of stars and oriental kings,

of gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

For when this life was born

that power that was

and is

with God,

inseparable,

the endless beginning,

was seen

even in a baby

in swaddling clothes

lying in a manger.

CHRISTPOWER.

Jesus, you are the Christ.

To know you is to live,

to love,

to be.

O come, then, let us adore him!