

January 5, 2020 | Sanctuary worship service

TEXT: [John 1:1–18](#)

TITLE: “L” Cubed – Logos, Light, Life

By the Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

I asked Lenore (Williams) to read Matthew 2:1–12, the Epiphany passage, rather than the Isaiah passage printed in the bulletin, because although this is the second Sunday after Christmas, it is also Epiphany Sunday. Matthew 2:1–12 is a familiar passage that recounts the wise persons from the East coming to Jerusalem inquiring about the child born king of the Jews. This is a continuation of Jesus’ birth story, of the star rising foretelling of his birth. One commentator stated that unlike the Gospel of Luke telling the story of Jesus’ birth from the perspective of the peasantry, Matthew reflects Jesus’ birth as a grand event that elicited responses from the powerful and aristocracy—kings and wise persons bringing costly gifts. The one thing that all of these people had in common regardless of their status or class is they were led to the Christ child by a star—a beaming light shining in the sky proclaiming his birth.

The Gospel of John’s birth announcement is different. Mary and Joseph, the animal-filled barn, the manger with the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, the shepherds keeping watch by night, the wise persons from the East and King Herod are all absent from John’s proclamation of the birth of Jesus. One commentator states: “Compared to the nativity stories, John’s opening words, as magnificent as they are, have a more distant, reflective, intellectual ring to them” (Thomas H. Troeger, *Feasting on the Word Commentary, Year A, Vol. 1*). The first 18 verses of the first chapter of John are rich, complex and deep. There are a number of sermon points a preacher could exegete and elucidate; far too many for one sermon in our context. Yet, the three points that are continually present in this passage is that in the beginning there was Logos, Light and Life.

John harkens back to Genesis, proclaiming that in the beginning God spoke the Word and all of creation came into being. The heavens were separated from the waters, night was separated from the day, and humanity was created in the image of God. The Word, Logos, was present in the beginning. Logos was with God and Logos was God. John is making it crystal clear that Jesus’ existence did not begin with his earthly birth. Jesus, Logos, always existed. He preceded the Bethlehem birth-event. Logos always was and always will be, and apart from Logos nothing existed.

Greeks and Jews understood the concept of Logos as the mind or Wisdom of God who made heaven and earth and created order out of chaos. John’s message was written to early Christians who were being persecuted. His words gave them assurance that they could withstand trials and tribulations by reminding them that in Jesus Christ the creating, controlling, sustaining, and illuminating mind of God had come to earth. The one in whom the creative power of God was and is still working—changing water into wine, walking on water, opening the eyes of the blind, and speaking life into dead situations and circumstances.

We have all heard the saying: “Loose lips sink ships,” or as the writer of Proverbs (18:21) states: “Life and death are in the power of the tongue.” Many individuals have achieved their potential because someone spoke encouragement or made them believe they could achieve anything, while others have heard words of diminishment, denigration and demonization their entire lives. Words have power. Words can encourage or dishearten; create or destroy; enliven or darken. Despite the world not knowing or recognizing Jesus, he spoke light and life. Jesus was and is the true light come from God, shining light into dark places.

The Bible tells us that anything done in the dark will come to light (Luke 8:17). Nothing stays hidden, when light shines upon it. Light illuminates our weaknesses, imperfections, biases, and transgressions. Even when we think we have gotten away or rationalize our negative behaviors, eventually they are brought to light, particularly when they harm other people. Light also illumines our assets, strengths, values, and qualities. When we use our time, talent and words to shine light into others’ dark or desperate situations, into untenable circumstances, we are projecting the light and love of God. John’s Gospel confirms that the true light, that is Jesus Christ, enlightens and gives life, and darkness cannot overcome him or us.

I’m not negating the fact that we have all experienced or may be experiencing times of darkness. Life can be difficult. Illnesses and death, employment and financial instability, homelessness and hunger, racism, xenophobia, heterosexism, and sexism are all realities. None of this can be glossed over or denied. However, when the light of God shines on us we are strengthened, empowered and enlivened us to work and walk with those the world considers expendable, unimportant, lazy, or deserving of their situation in life.

Life. God became flesh and lived among us. God was fully divine and fully human. That’s difficult at best to wrap our minds around that mystery. God created life and became incarnate that we might have life and life more abundantly. Because God came in the personhood of Logos, we now live our lives in God. For it is in God that we move, breathe, and have our being. Apart from God, life is not worth living for there is no one else who is with us through all of life’s transitions, joys and sorrows; our cares and concerns.

John 1:1–18, is not the Epiphany passage that is typically preached on Epiphany Sunday, but John’s words awaken and nudge and remind us that God the Divine Parent, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were, are and always will be “‘L’ Cubed – Logos, Light and Life”—and all because of the fourth “L” – Love; God’s gracious, faithful and merciful love for us. May we exemplify, speak, and be words of light, life and love to one another in this New Year. May it be so. Amen.

Over the course of time the church has adopted Confessions to in response to and as an expression of our thankfulness to God’s, as well as to help us understand our relationship to God and one another. Today, please stand as you are able and let us

recite together the Confession of 1967 which affirms God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ that acknowledges the worth and value of all people.