

CHRISTMAS: RECEIVING GOD'S GIFT OF LOVE

**The Nativity of Our Lord
Christmas Day
December 25, 2009**

**Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]
John 1:1-14**

Hindsight Is 20/20

It's hard to imagine that Mary and Joseph and the shepherds fully understood the magnitude of the moment even with all of the angelic singing and heavenly praise. Even with Joseph's dream (Matthew 1:20, 21) and Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), it is difficult to determine if they truly recognized the pre-existent Word through which the universe was made and organized in the little baby in the manger.

Yet, this is the affirmation we find in John 1:1-14 and Hebrews 1:1-4. In less than a century after Jesus' birth, the Gospel according to John and the Letter to the Hebrews proclaim Jesus as the reflection of God's glory (Hebrews 1:3), the exact imprint of God's very being (Hebrews 1:3), one who sustains all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3), the Word through whom all things were created (John 1:1, 3 and Hebrews 1:2), the glory as of a Father's only Son (John 1:14), and the light of all people (John 1:4).

As we gather with those we love the most and celebrate the birth of Jesus, we are once again given the opportunity to look back on another year and reflect (just as the authors of John's Gospel and the letter to the Hebrews reflected on the coming of Jesus). Knowing that hindsight is 20/20, what can we learn from all the events that shaped our lives during 2009?

This past year has been full of births, graduations, marriages, anniversaries, baptisms, and birthdays. Celebration upon celebration. Likewise, the year has also had its share of deaths, failures, divorces, headaches, and heartaches. Devastation upon devastation. Such celebration and devastation evidence the fact that we are still here and when we look around, there are others who are still here with us. As long as we have the ability to recognize this and to be recognized, we have the capacity to hope.

Mary and Joseph were shaped and transformed by the birth of their son, Jesus. They were also shaped and transformed by the cruel power of an empire that forced them from their home during the last month of Mary's pregnancy and made this holy family travel many miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Through the best and worst, Mary and Joseph were shaped and transformed.

How has 2009 shaped and transformed you? As you pause and reflect on another year, what small and cataclysmic events have landed you where you are now? How have you allowed these events to shape and transform your life? I pray that the well of hope runs deep in your life so that you, too, can sing like the prophet Isaiah, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation” (52:7a, *NRSV*).

The Reflection for Christmas Day was prepared by the Rev. K. Jason Coker, an ordained minister with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and pastor of Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Connecticut. Visit www.wiltonbaptist.org to learn more about the ministries of Wilton Baptist Church.

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This day we remember to pray and offer thanks to God for the “Word made flesh” who came to share our humanity and who illuminates the world with his light. On this joyful day we “sing a new song” and spread the Good News of Emmanuel – God with us!

Activity Corner: “A Litany of Light”

Supplies needed: Bible; candle (optional).

Gather members of your household in a circle and read together John 1:1-14 as a litany. Place a lit candle in the center of the circle (optional). Designate someone to read the passage, and invite everyone to respond with the words “Jesus is the light of the world” at the end of verses 2, 5, 8, 10, 13, 14. (Instruct the reader to pause at those intervals.) Discuss how the word “light” is used in this passage. In what ways is Jesus “the light of the world?” Then read the following passages and discuss how “light” is used: John 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35,36; 12:46; 1 John 1:5-7. Follow-up the discussion by reading Matthew 5:14 and discussing ways in which we can be “like light for the whole world.” Conclude by singing “Shine, Jesus, Shine” or “The Light of the World Is Jesus” or “This Little Light of Mine” or one of your favorite Christmas carols.