

## Getting to Know Jesus, the Christ

Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Feb 2, 2014

### The Light of God

John 1:1-5 & Psalm 84  
(354, 358, 530, 556)

‘In the beginning...’

Those words open the Book of Genesis,  
as God creates the universe.

The same words open the Gospel of John,  
as God re-creates the universe.

God, for John, is *Logos*.  
It’s a Greek word rich in meaning.  
In fact, it means ‘meaning,’  
and ‘logic,’ and ‘word,’ and ‘speech,’  
and ‘explanation,’ and ‘sense,’ and ‘relationship.’

And Jesus, for John, is God.  
He has given us his divinity to take human flesh.  
He has entered fully into human existence  
to model the kind of meaningful relationships  
with God, others, and self  
that God intended us to enjoy at our creation.

John calls this ‘life.’  
For Greeks, this word points to the vitality  
that characterizes all living things.  
For early Greek Christians,  
it was the energy of the Holy Spirit,  
the flow of God’s energy in us and through us.  
We are brought into being by the very breath of God.  
That gift remains with us throughout our lives.  
It’s in from the beginning.  
It’s the very foundation and source of our being.

And this ‘life,’ according to John, is the ‘light’ of all people.  
For Greeks, this word points to ‘illumination’ and ‘making known.’  
Early Greek Christians talked about ‘revelation.’

Jesus was the new way God chose to reveal his nature and desires  
to all humanity.

In Jesus, God re-created his approach to bringing humanity  
back to its original blessing,  
back to into intimate relationship with God,  
back into the life and light that made them capable of blessing  
as God has originally intended.

As I was pondering this text this week,  
I found myself remembering Duke Ellington's first Sacred Concert.  
Mark Harvey, a musician, educator and United Methodist minister, said,  
"Ellington's sacred vision was broader than even he could imagine –  
For in fact he spoke to people of all sorts and conditions,  
beyond categories of even believers and unbelievers.  
His faith was grounded in love, and ...  
love had to be limitless, unconditional, and full of possibility.  
This personal faith undergirded ... a social ethic of celebration,  
one which joined ecstatic praise with deep concern for social justice."

One of the most moving pieces in that first Sacred Concert  
is 'In the Beginning God.'

The first rendition of it lasts almost 20 minutes.  
It comes back into the concert later for about 4.5 minutes.  
The song won a Grammy Award in 1967.  
I imagine the baritone sax that comes in early in this song  
as the originating breath of the Spirit  
resonating over the chaos to bring together  
a joyful and delightful creation  
and get everything swinging.

Another of my favourite and most influential musicians died this week.  
That was Pete Seeger.

I talked a bit about his impact on me with the youth this morning.

It's the same blend of celebration and social passion  
that we find in Ellington's Sacred Concerts.

It's the same consent to letting the light of life  
that John speaks of in his Gospel  
flow from us and through us into a world  
filled with darkness and death.  
Too often too many of us give in to the darkness and death.  
We comply to the point of conspiring  
with the draining of compassionate life  
that characterizes so much in our modern world.

Ellington and Seeger were eloquent voices  
in music and words  
against that denial of God's energy and breath.  
They set our toes tapping and our souls soaring.  
They were attuned to rhythms of grace and gratitude  
that beat at the deepest levels of our beings  
where God holds us in her bosom.

That's what God wants us to know –  
that we are upheld by his love in everything we do,  
and not only us, but all humanity.  
They may not know it yet,  
they may not honour it yet,  
they may be lost in the darkness of serving death.  
But God is still with them and still loves them.

As we see the light of God's life,  
as we step further into that light,  
as we begin to feel the resonance of its rhythms in our souls,  
the Spirit continues to teach us God's ways,  
continues to show us what it means to be truly human,  
continues to form us into the image of Jesus Christ.

That is the challenge and the joy  
of being ever more consciously Christian.

In the beginning ...  
God loved so broadly and so deeply  
that he blessed all of humanity  
so they could bless all of the creation.

What a privilege it is  
to be caught up in  
that wonderful rhythm of grace and gratitude  
as it enlightens our lives.

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