

John 1:1-14

Life and Light

December 25, 2022

One of the features of life that has become more apparent in modern times involves the extent to which human beings have impacted and affected change in the natural world. Think of where we are; here in this small city where all around is the evidence of human decision-making, creativity and resourcefulness.

The buildings themselves bear witness: government buildings and private businesses, residential buildings and churches, hospitals and schools. None of these, nor the roads that connect them, nor the pipes and wires that bring them water and heat and light, came naturally, someone had to think them up, design them, procure the resources, and construct them.

From the harvesting and processing of the raw materials to the last stroke of the paint brush, every last bit of the landscaping, had to be done by someone. It took thousands of years and millions of people to achieve the modern landscape.

It is really quite remarkable when you think about it. Even when one considers the mess that has been made to go with things, it is remarkable that people can discern the mess, and decide to clean it up, or at least try to.

No other species is capable of such an impact, nor of the self-reflection, will, intellect, and capacity for relationship, necessary to accomplish such a

remaking of the world. Yet the relationships that happen in the buildings are more remarkable than the buildings themselves are, doctors helping to heal and teachers teaching, people doing honorable work to make an honest living, leaders making sure the power and water is on, families happening, the faithful at worship and service. That is a thought to keep in mind.

There are some, I suppose, who believe that human beings are no more than the sum of the biological parts; that their decisions, feelings, desires and fears, their dreams, are the product of biological processes and no more. Actually, the ability to reach such a conclusion defies the conclusion itself, but that is another consideration.

It has always been the claim of faith, and certainly the claim of biblical faith, that human beings are, both individually and as a part of groups they participate in, *more than and different from*, the sum of the parts. Certainly we are limited in space and time by our physical bodies. Paul wrote, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels,” and he was right.

Nevertheless, our self-awareness has led to the idea that there is more, it is the root from which the idea of creation springs. All of this, all of us come from something greater than we are.

Even though the first chapters of Genesis come to mind for many people, our text today, from the prologue to the Gospel of St. John, is probably the

leading text in the development of the Doctrine of Creation, which focuses our attention on what God has thought up and brought to life and light, before which human creativity pales. We read,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . Through him all things were made . . . In him was life, and that life was the light of humanity. The light shines in the darkness.” We are drawn to consider the connection between what people have brought to life and what God has made.

What is it that God was thinking up and designing, procuring the resources for, and bringing to life and light? A study of nature is fascinating enough I suppose and one might reasonably conclude that the heavens and the earth, made for their own sakes, is enough; the majestic array of the universe and the microscopic order of molecules and cells and DNA that make for the complexity and rich variety of this planet’s natural display. It is interesting enough on its own merit.

But is it for its own sake?

The text is also foremost in the development of the Doctrine of the Incarnation, and for that reason it is a part of the common lectionary for the season of Christmas, We read,

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full and grace and truth.”

It is the Incarnation in two brief sentences. To incarnate something is to bring it to life, like the pipes and wires that bring water and light into our houses and buildings. It happened at the birth of Jesus. . . . These two doctrines provide rich theological soil to introduce people to the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

And there is another sentence that bares attention, one that may be overshadowed by the two already mentioned. We read;

“Yet to all who . . . who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor a human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

We use brick and mortar and copper and steel and countless other materials to give shape to the places we inhabit in the same way that God in nature uses carbon and oxygen and hydrogen and all the rest, to give shape to our bodies and breathe life into them; but the language most dear is not the language of physical things, earthen vessels, rather, it is the poetry of grace and truth, the language of relationships, that fill up our vocabularies with words like:

Compassion, love, mercy, peace and joy and hope; words like responsibility and honor, sincerity and

honesty, integrity, respect, and dignity, and many more. These words refer not so much to how we are made but to how we behave and treat one another. They represent the realities that make human beings more than the sum of the parts, alive with meaning and hope.

I could mention the dark side of it all, the dangerous side, the risk, Paul also wrote that, “all creation has been subjected to futility, in hope,” and he was right about that too, but it is Christmas Day so I won’t; just this: if one of the features of life involves the extent to which human beings have impacted and affected change in the world that God has made;

then it is also true that all around is the evidence of God’s decision-making, creativity, and resourcefulness, which not only made the heavens and the earth, and breathed life and light into it, but also brought into being an incarnation of all that is good, through the birth of Jesus.

On this joyous and holy day and in view of God’s creative love and light, which dreamed us up and gave life to the world, let us consider this one question that brings us full circle: What kind of persons do we want to be? What kinds of things do we want to think up, and envision and design, and bring to life and light? In God’s name.

Merry Christmas!

[Back](#)

[Home](#)