

## 12.25.2017 Christmas Day (John 1, Hebrews 1)

Ronald Reagan used to love to tell a story about a couple of anxious parents, who just before Christmas visited a psychiatrist's office due to a concern regarding their identical twin boys. It seems that one of the sons was a continual pessimist, and the other an unwavering optimist. They were wondering how to get the two boys on a more even keel. The psychiatrist advised the parents, this Christmas, to give the pessimist a room filled with all the best toys, everything he asked for and more, and to the optimist, a room filled with horse manure and maybe a shovel, but that's it. The parents did as they were instructed, and this was the result on Christmas morning:

In the first room, the parents found their pessimistic son slouched in a chair with a dejected look on his face. He hadn't even opened one present. He said to his parents, "What's the use? I probably won't like what I find, and if I do, you probably won't let me keep it." The parents quickly made their way to the other room, hoping that the prescribed treatment worked more effectively on their optimistic son. When they reached him, they found this son with a big smile on his face shoveling just as fast as he could. He said to his parents, "With all this horse manure, I know there's just got to be a pony in here somewhere!"

If you committed that story to memory, you could re-tell it many times over the course of your life, because of the way it relates to so many different types of people and circumstances. It relates to parents who've experienced that anxious feeling about how their kids are turning out, as well as to parents who've taken extreme measures in an attempt to alter a child's behavior. The story relates to those of us who have siblings, and have looked at our brother or sister and wondered how children with the same parents, who grew up in the same house, can be so very different. The story relates to the pessimists who have missed out on blessings that were right there in front of them, and to the optimists who have been fooled time and again by their own wishful thinking.

That story relates to so many different people in diverse circumstances, and this morning, I would suggest there's a lesson found there that pertains to all of us, a lesson about truth, and the importance of seeking objective, absolute

truth. We live in a society where many people no longer believe in absolute truth. They view truth as something that is relative, that is always subject to our own individual interpretation, but this simple story paints a vivid picture of how good human beings are at deceiving themselves, and how quickly our own finite, fallen, limited, human perspective can lead us to believe a lie. The pessimist in this story has defined his own truth, and is certain that he has nothing of value, but the truth is, his parents purchased everything he asked for and more. The optimist is certain that he has exactly what he wants, but the truth is, he has nothing but a shovel and a room full of horse manure. From our vantage point we can see the big picture and we know that these boys have deceived themselves, that they're blind to the truth, and so this story illustrates the danger of defining truth based on one's own way of thinking or limited perspective.

Clearly, we all need a way to avoid such self deception, and the Scripture passages that we read on this Christmas Day provide the way, by revealing to fallen humanity, the absolute, infinite Truth that is meant to be the bedrock of our lives. Our Epistle begins by stating that God spoke to ancient people in different times, different places, and in different ways, but that now "*in these last days*" He has spoken to us through One who speaks with the full authority of God, One who possesses a complete knowledge of God's will and purpose, for now, in these last days, God has spoken "*unto us by His Son*" (Hebrews 1:2). In our Gospel, St. John describes the Son of God as the Word of God spoken in creation, made flesh. In those magnificent, familiar verses, John begins his Gospel by taking us back to a time and place, when there was no time or place. He takes the reader back into eternity, before the creation of time or space. He takes us to an existence of God, and nothing else. John writes, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made*" (John 1:1-3).

If our desire is to build our lives on the rock of absolute Truth, instead of ourselves or the shifting sand that this world offers, then there is no other foundation than Jesus Christ, for in the beginning, before all worlds, He already was. If our desire is to move beyond our own subjective truth and to gain true perspective, then we look no further than Jesus Christ, for "*by Him*

*all things were created, in heaven and on earth*” (Colossians 1:16). Consider His creation and His heavenly perspective through this example: Astronomers have determined statistically that there are about 10 million billion billion stars in the known universe, that’s a 10 followed by twenty four zeros. It’s not humanly possible to count that high. If you could count even as many as twenty numbers every second, it would still take you at least 100 million billion years to count the number of stars in the known universe, and no one knows how many stars exist beyond the reach of our telescopes. That is Jesus’ perspective yesterday, today, and forever.

Our Lord, who ruled the universe that He created from His throne in glory, who reigned in majesty beyond anything we can imagine, came at Christmas to be born in a stable. As we celebrate Christmas Day, and bring to mind this baby born in Bethlehem, consider the unimaginable miracle that God the Son, who made heaven and earth, vast beyond our comprehension, chose to enter His creation in pursuit of you. Consider what Jesus gave up at Christmas to come to you, consider the greater truth that He came to die for you, and you will never again doubt the extent of God’s love for you.

The Creator has entered His creation. If He would choose, two thousand years ago, to be born to peasants and welcomed by shepherds, clearly there is no place too humble for Him. He said, *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). God is with us, even here, even now, in something as common as bread and wine. He comes to us to the end that we may know the Truth, and that Truth shall set us free (John 8:32).