

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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POWER TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD

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Text of a Sermon preached Christmas Eve

December 25, 2021

ISAIAH 9:2-7 | PSALM 96
TITUS 2:11-14 | LUKE 2:1-14

Every child born on this earth is a miracle. No matter who. No matter when. Every child is a miracle.

Every child is a child of destiny. Parents and grandparents make sure of it. Culture and context do their work. Each of us, whether life is long or short, has a job to do, a role to play.

While every child is great, not every child understands its greatness. While every child has value, not every child will grow up to recognize it, grow up to know what to value, and grow up into its promise.

Sadly, not every child turns out to be a child of a promise. This depends upon the attention we are paying. At the moment of conception. At the moment of birth. At the moment of maturation.

Not every child is an answer to a particular question. Some children are just children of the earth, children of the wheel of material things and time.

Not every child is born in the time of Herod, king of the Jews. Not every child will be raised to believe in the One Creator God. Indeed, not every child is born to be compared to one of the first self-proclaimed god-men, Augustus Caesar, king of the Romans, king of all empires, son of the sun, son of god. By definition, not every child can be the Messiah.

While every child is a miracle, not every child will command hearts. While every child has a destiny, not every child will break down dividing walls between people and redefine peace. While every child has a promise, not every child is born of a promise to right an ancient wrong, to repair a long broken promise of why we are on this earth to begin with.

Can any child do such things?

On this night we rejoice in the birth of every child. Also, on this night we rejoice that God has chosen this particular child to introduce us to our salvation, to right the ancient wrongs, to help us put away the old hatreds.

On a night like this, we can remember that every child lets go its first cry, lays on its mother's belly, and opens its eyes to the pure possibility of the next breath.

On this night, Mary sees all this and more. Mary also greets the inn keeper, the angels, and the shepherds, the singing of heaven and the singing earth, and treasures all them all in her heart. She ponders them.

Ponder means, to put together. How do we define the truly human? How do we define the divine? Who will define the human? Who will define the divine?

One of our best poets said: To err is human. To forgive divine. But tonight, because this child is born, because the Word is made flesh, we can see more. Heaven comes down to earth, as earth rises up to meet heaven's perfecting power. Earth receives her king. Heaven and nature sing.

Many ask: what is the message of Christmas?

The songs declare: The light shines in the darkness. Draw near. Take it within. Let it shine within. Let it fill you and pour back out. As far as love takes any of us.

God's Word, spoken to us tonight, is not just a "message." This Word become Flesh is also the power that, by faith, unites us to the Creator and Re-maker of all.

He comes not just to show us something lower or higher, not just to show us an ideal, not just to show us our best selves.

He comes to infuse us with his light, to unite us to every family on earth, to show us how to err, and forgive, to put aside the ancient hatreds, to wish "peace on earth" to everyone we meet.

Jesus has come to fulfill his destiny, and will, if we let him, make us all, children of the promise. Amen.

