

The Universe of Christmas

Thomas Robinson, *Advent for Grown-ups 4*, Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 2011

John 1:1-18

¹ **In the beginning** was the **Word**,
and the **Word** was with **God**, and the **Word** was **God**.
² He was with God in the beginning. ³ **Through him all things were made**; without him
nothing was made that has been made.
⁴ **In him was life**, and that life was the **light** of **all people**. ⁵ The **light** shines in the
darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify
concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he
came only as a witness to the light.
⁹ **The true light** that gives **light to everyone** was **coming into the world**. ¹⁰ He was in the
world, and though the world was made through him, the **world did not recognize him**.
¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did **not receive him**.
¹² Yet to **all who did receive him**, to those who believed in his name, he gave the **right to
become children of God** – ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a
husband's will, but born of God.
¹⁴ **The Word became flesh**
and made his **dwelling among us**.
We have seen **his glory**, the glory of the **one and only Son**,
who came from the Father, full of **grace** and **truth**.
¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "*This is he of whom I said, 'He who
comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'*")
¹⁶ Out of **his fullness** we have all received **grace** in place of **grace** already given.
¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ.
¹⁸ No one has ever seen God,
but the **one and only**, who is himself **God**
and is in closest relationship with **the Father**,
has made him known.

John 14:6-9a

⁶ Jesus answered, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father
except through me.*" ⁷ *If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. **From now on, you
do know him and have seen him.***"
⁸ Philip said, "*Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.*"
⁹ Jesus answered: "*Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long
time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*"

John 3:16

¹⁶ For **God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son**, that whoever **believes**
in him shall not perish but have **eternal life**.

From Description to Experience

We all have experienced the difference between hearing a description of something and experiencing the thing itself. Sometimes disappointment, sometimes much better or very different. A Christmas gift, a beautiful vacation picture, a distinguished looking person.

The whole of Christianity flows from the event experienced by people from Mary to Paul and others that the God they had known by the word of scripture, the word of creation, of Torah, of prophecy, of wisdom, of promise, that one God / Word *"became flesh and made his dwelling among us."* When Mary realized what was happening to her, she saw that the event must be the center of a new light on who God is and who we are.

The Experience of Jesus

All of Jesus' family and followers were believers in only one God. But something happened when they were with Jesus: The way he spoke to them, the signs he did, his generous poverty, the way he forgave sins, his amazing teaching, the way he dealt with scripture and temple, ultimately the way he died, and the experience of his resurrection.

It wasn't that they decided to promote Jesus to divine status like Caesar. They didn't redefine Jesus in terms of their understanding of God. Rather they were confronted with the realization that God was there in Jesus and that they had to transform their knowledge of God in the light of what Jesus did and who he was. Do you want to understand the reality of God, his grace, truth, power, authority, love, justice? Look at Jesus.

The Universe of Christmas

It started in the heart of one girl, Mary, helped by Elizabeth. If God chose me, God is fulfilling his promises in a wholly unexpected way? It continued with every person who became a follower of Jesus. A long, often difficult process. We thought we knew a thing or two, how the world really works, what power is, what real fame and glory looks like.... Some were radically disappointed. Judas betrayed Jesus. Some were cynical.

John takes us into the heart of new vision. We've got to start over...go back to the beginning. We need to see the whole universe, everything that exists, every person that exists in terms of this love, word, light, life, fullness, grace, truth. Nothing in the universe can ever be mindless or meaningless. It all flows from a gracious, self-giving, loving Word.

The truth of Jesus is challenging and difficult. It puts self-giving love rather than self-glorifying power or mindless chance at the center of everything. It is vulnerable but true.

Life in the Light of Jesus

John shows us that the aim of the events is not just themselves but us humans, the world that God loves. We can't build an access to God but God allows us freedom to reject him. God woos us by his love. He gives light to illuminate us. He calls us to see the reality of Jesus, to believe, to trust him, to receive him.

The ultimate gift of Christmas is that we can share in the eternal life of God, become children of God – more than simply his creatures – sharing his life, his love, his grace.

He calls us to this sharing in the Lord's Supper, giving us bread and cup, his body, his blood, so physical, so ordinary, as he calls us to share his grace, his glory, his very life.