

John 1:1-5, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:10-14

“Love”

1. I’m reading a book titled “Humankind” which presents a perspective that, when it comes down to it, human beings are essentially GOOD.
 - a. You may be skeptical, maybe because you hear of terrible things people have done throughout history,
 - b. or because theologically you’re thinking about some concept like original sin,
 - c. but then again you maybe feel like this is a basic truth, since you’ve experienced kindness from loved ones and even perfect strangers.
 - d. The idea of humans being good at their core plays out in a number of ways, but especially as humans, from prehistoric times, began to associate with each other, forming connections beyond their own family systems
 - e. There is something about the social nature of humans, to be there with each other and for each other:
 - i. it shows us the potential for goodness in humanity,
 - ii. And for people of faith, it connects us to the God who created us
2. On this final Sunday of Advent, a day dedicated to Love, the choir and the scriptures are helping us center on God’s gift of love by focusing us on God’s presence, and the promise of God’s presence with us in Jesus.
 - a. We’ve heard today the timeless opening words of the gospel of John, referring to Jesus
 - i. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”
 - b. And then the angel spoke to Joseph (echoing the prophet Isaiah) and declared that the child to be born would be named Emmanuel, because that means “God is with us.”
 - c. And finally another set of angels proclaimed to the lowly shepherds these unbelievable words “to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah”
3. God is present with us, and that’s a sign of God’s love for us
 - a. God, who made us in God’s own image, is with us, and that’s that goodness we see and feel in one another
 - b. God, who wants us to be in relationship with God, is with us, because God became one of us in the person of Jesus.

- c. God who wants us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, then wants us to channel God's love and God's presence among all people, so that the family circles and the bonds of community are based on what makes us human: the imprint of God love in each of us
4. God's love in Jesus is presence, God-with-us presence, stubborn presence, healing presence, and as the social beings that we are, it's presence we're called to cherish and share.

Reflection questions

1. Share a personal story of a family Christmas which gives an example of God's love.
2. What does it mean to you that one of Jesus' names is Emmanuel, God With Us?
3. How do we channel that presence, "God With Us," in a world which seems to declare "Every person for themselves?"