

*Sermon: Christmas Eve 2009
“A Progressive Christmas story”*

*Rev. John G Smith
Leaside United Church*

*I suppose I've been wanting to re-write the Christmas story for a long time.
I think of it as a beautiful allegory for the birth of consciousness.
However, over the years, we have synthesized all the stories in to one story (which
actually isn't being true to the text!), and, worse, we have hardened the lines of the story
and cast them in a literal framework. Were there magic stars and choirs of angels? No.
But that doesn't mean that the story isn't true at a deeper level.*

*I don't doubt for a moment that God is active in our lives. That's why I think it's
especially important for us to re-imagine the story for our time. Here, I have taken the
Luke Christmas story as the basis for this re-telling. I'd like to think that we might one
day be able to accept that there are **new** revelations of God's divine purpose; sometimes
I think we have forgotten that the Word continues to evolve, to be spoken, and to inspire.*

*This is just a preliminary version! I am hoping that you, dear reader, will add your
comments and send back to me! My goal would be that together we write the story anew.
Please email your comments to me at jjandl@rogers.com*

*Also, please sign your name to your comments. With the information highway going
virtually anywhere, I think it's only fair that I know who you are! Thanks for
participating!*

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In the olden days,
(in the same kind of days as we still know,
in the same kind of life we still live),
something new was about to happen.

I suppose it could have happened in any number of ways.
But what happened was this:
All the forces of nature, all the spiritual energy of the
cosmos, and all the powers of the universe,
however we might name them,
came together in a surprising way.

This is just how the natural world functions.
No two created objects are ever the same. Everything is
new and different each moment.

In fact, we will exchange our bodily cells
about 7 times in our individual lifetimes.
(You could insert here your own example)

We are always made new. That's the way creation works.
It never stops changing. It never stops creating.

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But somehow when Jesus was alive, people became conscious of the divine energies within him, never dreaming of course that it would be true too for us. In our time we are still learning how to be conscious of the divine in all of us. What an ongoing evolutionary tale!!!

Back then, people were able to see in a more direct way, how divine energy might be manifest in a human life. ***It was as if the forces of nature made love with each other, and from their union, was birthed a child.***

They named him Jesus, but it could have been Pedro or Omar or even Julia.

(You can insert your own name here)

This child would live in the world in a way that was different and new, untried, risky.

This child would know the poverty, oppression and violence that were part and parcel of his life, but it would not damage his spirit.

This is because he knew that his spirit came from many other places.

It was as if a ***host of angels*** surrounded him, all bearing down on him with their positive energy, a synergy of love and blessing, (some said it was like a song) that somehow, this child never forgot.

While the rest of us sleep unaware, this child did not.

He knew he was a divine child of the universe, even if the rest of us do not.

Have we forgotten that Jesus is for us an allegory of what the human spirit can accomplish when it is in alignment with all the forces of nature? That we too are the ones born within a dark and dingy stable?

Have we forgotten that the Great Story, the story of life (of ALL of life)

is still being written,

still being spoken out loud,

still being revealed to us?

How come Jesus could see that, but we cannot?

Oh how we worry about the details surrounding his birth!!

Was it a virgin birth? What does that really mean?

Did it happen in Bethlehem?

Was there really a census at that time?

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Does it matter?

Does it matter if our twenty-first century ears can't accept these notions at a literal level?

What we are learning now is that what matters isn't so much the details of the story, but rather, *the telling of it*.

Those who tell the story, change it.

It's like a second edition of the book, revised.

Divine Love has authored a book; we are readers, but also editors.

The planet revolves around its axis, but each time it does, newly birthed Divine Love gets a chance to be born again in the hearts and minds of the people of the world.

It's a *mystery*, this creative impulse, but it's also a *miracle* we can see.

If all people around the earth suddenly were to wake to this phenomenon, who knows what power might be unleashed upon the earth???

Well, I think we DO know this already, because we always say that we wish Christmas could last all through the year. That's because the story embodies so much of the best of what human spirit can be:

peace and goodness, kindness and gentleness, compassion, empathy, understanding, and the sanctity of and FOR all of life: these gifts can and DO unfold in our time!

When we tell the story in new ways, we open the story up to the creative impulse of the Author, whose spirit is birthed in our words,
in our lives,
in our hearts.

What was born one night a couple of thousand years ago, was the universal promise and possibility that has always been in existence, in fact, it IS the nature of the universe.

It was not a once-for-all-time event;

the incarnation of Divine Love had been going on since the very beginning.

But it was in the life of Jesus that we first became conscious of this.

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It was the poor who noticed first.
They understood that they too had inherited from God, a reality that was far beyond their dreams.
There were stories about farmers and fishers, father and son, a woman and a coin. Jesus talked about ordinary things; it was the ordinary person who really understood! They might have been shepherds, or handmaidens that milked the cows, or carpenters working in their shops, or beggars in the streets.
They heard the Word, the divine Word; they heard that their lives were full of possibility and promise, despite their circumstances.

They called it the kingdom of God.
We call it a New Earth.

Of course, the powers of the day tried to crush this rising consciousness in the poor, the disabled, the diseased, and those born on the wrong side of the human luck equation. The stronger people become in spirit, the stronger the power to crush it becomes.
The more spirit-filled and spirit-led the people become, the more determined the powers become to stamp out Spirit.

Some things never change.

(I had a whole bit about Empire here, but left it out when I preached the sermon)

Jesus would be singled out as the ONLY child of the universe. It was easier to deal with him that way: keep him at arm's length, unconnected.
They would try him on false charges, and kill him brutally, because there is no room in the halls of patriarchy for this kind of spirit-consciousness, this Word made flesh nonsense. It was not an acceptable world-view. It never is.

But did they succeed? Could Jesus' SPIRIT be stamped out?

In THESE days, we have the opportunity to live out the Christmas story in OUR time.
We must tell it now in ways that speak to the powers that oppress; we must unleash some of its inherent power.

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It's not the only story to tell of course. There are many that bring us closer in relationship to the One who created us. But it is a good one.

It shows us that we are still faced with the same seemingly insurmountable task of raising the consciousness of the world in which we live, raising it so that all may live in compassion, gentleness, awareness, kindness and love. What the Christmas story shows us is that we are called to be editors AND co-writers.

We're part of God's creative team.

Our actions, our words, our stories, shape the future.

We know the future is open, full of promise, and brimming with possibility.

Nature, science, religion, and human experience all point to the truth of the matter.

We are revising the story as we tell it!

It unfolds a little more as we tell it!

We witness both old and new at the same time!

What joy we find in this miracle, this mystery, this story.

What hope we find in this promise,

that there are no godforsaken places in the world.

Wherever we are,

however we find ourselves this year,

God's light still shines.

May it be so!!!!