

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

(December 25, 2022 church was canceled)

January 1, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 52: 7-10

Responsive Reading; Psalm 98

Epistle Reading; Hebrews 1: 1-12

Gospel Reading; John 1: 1-14

Sermon Title: What Child Is This

By Rev. Jim Gardner

(sermon was to be the Christmas sermon, but church was canceled. This sermon was given instead on January 1)

Summary; The birth of our Lord is more than a pretty scene of a stable with animals, angels, new parents and a tiny baby. It is a new beginning for the whole world.

Today we lit the Christ candle to the Son, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace. We celebrate the most famous birthday in all of history. Our houses, communities and churches are adorned with nativity scenes and beautiful music permeates the air.

For most of us it is a warm and fuzzy time of greeting the very human and very beautiful God-Child in a totally unassuming setting in a stable complete with animals, angels, new parents and the newly begotten child of God. This very human connection of mankind and God gives us a deep peace and joy that fills our hearts. Fills our hearts with the overflowing assurance of being infused with God's love that spills out of our eyes with tears and voices with songs and heavenly praise. We become part of God and God becomes part of us.

Christianity is sort of split up into two camps. A great number of strong believers are won over by the very gentle, loving depiction of Jesus as revealed in the nativity story that Luke presents and others want to see some kind of "plan" of action, initiated by God to accomplish a specific relationship between God and Jesus and mankind and all of creation. Luckily for us God is willing to address both dispositions.

This message is entitled, "What Child is This" to speak to those of us who are attracted to the nativity story, instead of quoting that hymn I would like to depict this concept with a contemporary Christmas hymn.

Mary, Did You Know? Written by Mark Lory is as follows;

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water? Mary, did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters? Did you know that your baby boy has

come to make you new? This child that you delivered will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man? Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand? Did you know your baby boy has walked where angels trod? When you kiss your little baby, you've kissed the face of God.

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again;
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak- the praises of the Lamb!

Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation? Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations? Did you know that your baby boy is Heaven's perfect Lamb? This sleeping child you're holding is the Great I Am.

This child that you delivered will soon deliver you. And, when you kiss your little baby, you've kissed the face of God.

Man! It does not get any more personal than that. This song puts the personal relationship with God into perspective, but what about the Theological revelation?

For that we need to read our Gospel Lesson for today.

John 1:1-14 says;

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of man.

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all through him might believe.

He was not the light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.

That was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

This reading from the gospel of John lays out the reason for that first Christmas and everything that happened thereafter.

This passage not only tells us who Christ was before He was begotten, i.e. the creator of everything, but it also tells us what He was sent to do and it gives us a role model that we can follow. Oh, we can never be Christ but we can be reincarnations of John the Baptist. We too can be a voice crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord."

Jesus is the light and we were sent, along with John the Baptist, to be a witness of.

We are sent to be a witness to a light that is so real and personal that it was born as a helpless baby to a real-life human mother and His adopted father Joseph.

That child that she delivered has delivered us, and adopted us to witness through our lives His love, compassion and saving grace. We need to interact with others so they too may believe and become worthy to be called children of God.

Jesus said that He makes everything new, and because He took on human form, He became part of us and made us part of Him

so that He could make everything through me and you. No pressure.

Hallelujah and Amen and Merry Christmas.