

December 24, 2018
This Precious, Precious Night
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*On this night we recall another –
the night God took a deep breath
for all that must be saved,
even the stars outshone themselves
and hillsides gloried with angelic music,
the good, good, good news bouncing down
like boulders, shaking the foundations royally,
announcing the advent of a ruler born
for all who must be saved.
It was the bloody same way
we all arrive on the scene
through the mother of all labor and sweat,
the pain stretching out like tidal waves
for all that must be made flesh.
Love is now newborn, if not exactly
recognizable . . . except to those who know
all must be saved from ourselves
Whatever evil armies occupy our affections
. . . by the bouncing baby news
that will throw even kings from their thrones.*

*Mary and Joseph and all of us are left
holding the baby,*

*Is this sensible, God?
Jesus doesn't answer.
He just suckles and sleeps
and wakes to a new day.*

I didn't write that poem. But I would have if I could have, because poetry gets so much closer to what cannot be spoken.

God giving God's own child for love of us, God's other children. I'll not make heads nor tails of it in words. But here we are just the same.

Can we even fathom such love – love meant not to crush us with guilt, but flood us with the realization of our own beloved-ness; to tempt us to imagine such self-worth that we treat our own lives like a treasure, and each other’s too.

The Creator God talking to God’s own self, reckoning what to do with the likes of us: “*I will become one of them,*” God said to God’s self. “*A baby brown one,*” God’s self answered back, “*then they’ll really have to pay close attention.*”

It’s only sweet because it’s a baby, because we’ve staged it with shepherds and lambs instead of the starving and the dying, the broken and the lost. They are the very evidence against us, the proof that we have failed to follow the simplest instructions: *Do good and not evil; depend on me and not yourselves.* Every story needs a beginning. Christ’s coming – at what we’ve named Christmas – was a *new* beginning.

Our celebration is our own new beginning, our do-over of the same project: *to do good and not evil; to depend on God and not ourselves.*

The church can use the season as we please: to refocus our lives and our life together on the mystery of our belovedness, on this invitation to be lovely to ourselves and one another.

Friends, the world doesn’t care where Christmas came from. The world cares if there is any cause for hope. We’re accountable to them for it – Hope. We who claim it now. Gathering. Reading. Singing. *The Word became bouncing, brown, baby flesh – And then he lived among us to Set. Us. Free.*

That is the story we’ve come to hear, and the one we’ve been sent to tell – here, now, to this waiting, wanting world. Would you pray with me?