

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people^[c] did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

I had a dream, or maybe it was just in the early morning time between sleep and getting out of the bed. In that dream I was remembering two things:

1. I remembered a reading that I had done sometime in the previous week about how **awareness of the Spiritual realm gently breaks in** amongst the overwhelming percentage of time we spend in paying attention to our physical and social environment –

- a. our body's appearance,
- b. our food supply,
- c. our clothing,
- d. our bedroom,
- e. our prescriptions
- f. our family and friends,
- g. our obligations,
- h. our social functions,
- i. the expectations others place on us,
- j. the expectations we think that others place on us –

the Spirit breaks through all of this in just little glimpses, small transient streaks – sometimes barely (or not even) noticeable.

2. The second memory in this dream place was of a time when I was able to see the Spirits dwelling among the physical players in my life. It was a strange thing, in this remembering: for I could see these gossamer slightly white-grey shapes moving in and among other people, and realizing their reality.

The Voice of the author of the reading, in Memory #1, was speaking aloud the thoughts, while my consciousness was remembering Memory #2 -- that very real time when I was able to see these Spiritual people and things.

I was hard pressed to remember **WHEN** it was that I had had that Memory #2 experience. And I was hard pressed to remember **WHERE** I was. And **HOW LONG** did it last? And **what made it stop**? Had I gotten busy and let go of that incredible experience.

I was very much aware of the fact that this was no mere dream, for I was remembering a very real thing that had occurred in my life. I just couldn't remember those details.

- The reality I remembered.
- The details I did not.
- How to return, I could not figure out.
- THEN, I fully awoke.

But now, fully awake, I am wondering if that actually was a memory of a reality – since I still can't figure out when – or was it a glimpse of a reality that I only wish to experience. I haven't sorted it all out – this revisiting of a memory that I can't remember having had the original experience. I haven't sorted it all out, **but I have continued to chew on it** as I went down the road of my Advent Journey.

There are basically two Christmas stories in the Gospels. One comes from Matthew and Luke. Here's the familiar Luke version [play the bear.]

It's the fuzzy-wuzzy-bear version. And **there is the Prologue to John version** – the one that I read just a moment ago.

In one sense, (as I learned in a group meditation on that scripture last week) it COULD be boiled down to a few succinct concepts and save a lot of space and time.

But it is NOT written that way; not succinct at all. It is wrapped in poetic language and it takes a spiritual OR cosmic look at the birth of Jesus. It is not limited to any particular physical setting. It is as contemporaneous in 2012 as it was in 4 BC.

The **fuzzy-wuzzy-bear version** varies from children's pageant to children's pageant in what bathrobes are worn, what child is so innocently sweet in their childlike acting – but basically the same factual, historical telling. Year after year.

But in our lives, some years, things do change.

Some years, the changes threaten to wreck the whole process.

Some years, it just doesn't feel like Christmas ... not the Christmas we had gotten comfortable with. People have departed. Life has changed. And Christmas seems lost to us. ... At least the **fuzzy-wuzzy-bear version** of Christmas.

But, **for as long as the Gospels have been around, God has given us these TWO CHOICES for hearing the Christmas good news.**

And there are times in this journey of life, when the John version – with all its fluid and poetic images – can take us closer to God than the **fuzzy-wuzzy-bear version**.

This Christmas, the **WORD of which John writes** may not feel like **HOPE**, **PEACE**, certainly not **JOY**, and questionable if it's even **LOVE**. There may be a new WORD dwelling among us ... but we're not quite sure what it is.

For many Christmases, we have been content to share the sentimentality of the familiar. Then, there are some Christmases that just don't work that way.

There may only be an ephemeral glimpse of a memory of something that we can't remember having, but somehow seems real. It's just a **POOF** and then it's gone.

What is the **WORD** for YOU this season?

Sometimes it is **ONLY** when the familiar has broken down -- or slipped away -- that we are able to experience the God-in-flesh in a way that we have never been blessed to know.

Don't PUSH it. Don't FORCE it. And don't feel bad if you sometimes feel melancholy more than other feelings. Whatever your feelings, they are yours. And one thing of which I am absolutely certain – from life and from scripture: GOD ALWAYS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE.

Know that the original carrier of Christmas – the Mother of God – could not figure all out all of her stuff. This season certainly did not turn out the way she had planned it. But, being well mature beyond her tender years, her life still teaches that some things are so deep that they can only be kept and pondered in the heart over time, until the dots (one by one) slowly get connected.

On this Christmas – some would say the holiest day of the year (others argue that it is Easter – but neither would have meant much without the other, right?) On this Christmas – it is my prayer that you allow some time to sit quietly:

Think of good Christmases gone by – not to bemoan that they aren't like that anymore – but to give thanks for having lived them.

Think of the people in your life who have been vehicles of God's message of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love to you at a time when you needed them -- not to grieve that some of them aren't here anymore – but to give thanks that their lives touched yours.

And then, be silent for a few moments. Just allow the WORD of God, which came into a stable 2,000-some years ago to come once more into your life. An old monk of the middle ages, Angelus Silesius, once observed: IF CHRIST WERE BORN IN BETHLEHEM A THOUSAND TIME AND NOT IN YOU, YOU WOULD BE ETERNALLY LOST.

Know that you are NOT lost. The WORD is waiting to be born in the silence of your heart again – in 2012 – a WORD that makes all the difference.

So may it be.