

December 23<sup>rd</sup> – Thursday

Centering Breath Prayer: Child of light...help me see you.

**Opening Prayer:**

*Precious Christ Child, born to show us God's glory, renew my heart with your song of love as I travel on the journey of love today. As I continue the quest for the special relationship you desire with me, let me "see" your glory in your creation. Open my eyes to see you and the grace and truth you bring. Help me to grow closer to you today. In your lovely name, I pray. Amen.*

**Scripture: John 1:1-14**

**Key Verse: John 1:14: *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth"* (NIV).**

Here we are, nearly to the celebration in Bethlehem. What shall we celebrate today? Do we celebrate the fact that we have finished all our preparations? Probably not, since most of us won't finish those until the last minute, and those of us who will finish the physical preparations still won't finish the spiritual ones. If you are like me, you may never finish all the things, physical or spiritual, that you feel you should finish. So, what shall we celebrate? How about celebrating the ability to "see" God in Jesus?

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1 NIV). *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1 NIV). In Genesis 1:26 we read, *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image...'"* (NIV). So, who is "us?" The creation account in Genesis never addresses this question, but John does. John is giving us a glimpse of the complex relationship between God and Jesus. John is letting us know that the birth of Jesus is not the beginning, that God (in all God's aspects) was planning everything we needed as far back as creation itself. John goes on to talk about the light, which Jesus will confirm later when he says, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness but have the light of life"* (John 8:12 NRSV). According to John, the Word (Jesus) was present during creation (a part of "us"), is the light by which we may "see" God, and *"became flesh and made his dwelling among us."* God chose to come among us through Jesus, whose birth we are about to celebrate.

God so loved us that he gave a part of himself, the Son, to be born and to live among us so that we might get a glimpse of God's glory and understand what we have missed by our separation from God. Then God sacrificed himself for us to close that separation. Nearly everyone, even those who are not really that familiar with the rest of the Bible, are familiar with John 3:16, the verse that expresses God's love for the world better than any other single verse. That one verse sums up the reason that Jesus came better than any other. But our key verse today describes another reason that is not as widely known. God became a human being so that we might "see" God, something that was not possible any other way. God knew we needed a human example to understand how we might live in harmony with God.

In the Genesis account of creation we learned that man (humankind) was made in God's image. So, we should be able to "see" God when we see each other. Unfortunately, we lost that ability when we became separated from God because of the sin in our lives. So God sent his only Son to live among us, to be born like we are, to grow and depend on humans for his early life, to seem just like any other human being, and yet still not be just like any other human. By doing this, God showed us that God understands us, because God lived on earth like us, was tempted like us, and stayed in God's will at all times. God also showed us that it was possible to be human and stay in God's will. We were made in the image of God, but our "image" got tarnished. Jesus showed us anew what that image was to be. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we read, "...*the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*" (NRSV). So, here we have another confirmation that Jesus came, in part, so that we could "see" God. As we said earlier in this devotional, Jesus is also the "light" which banishes the darkness of sin which surrounds us. That light shines from the glory of God which was "*made flesh*" when Jesus was born so many years ago. As we approach the celebration of that day, let us celebrate today the ability to "see" God that his coming brings. As we become more like our Lord, through the Holy Spirit, we can begin to "see" God once again in each other as the image of God begins to shine through. That's something to celebrate even as we travel!

**Additional Scriptures: Genesis 1:1, 26-27; John 8:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6**

**Questions for reflection and/or journaling:**

1. How do I "see" God in Jesus?
2. When I think about Jesus, what image do I have?
3. Am I reflecting that image?

**Suggestions for action:**

1. Phrase for your tree: **IMAGE OF GOD.**
2. Make a list of the attributes of the image of God you "see" in Jesus.
3. Choose one of the attributes and cultivate it in yourself through this day.
4. Look for those attributes in others today, remembering that they are made in the image of God.

**Closing Prayer:**

*Dearest Lord, who created all mankind in your own image, let your glory shine through me. Forgive my sins again today and let me reflect your glory instead of my own tarnished image. Help me to see you in the people around me. As I face the duties and responsibilities of this day, help me keep your image in my thoughts and actions. Help me to cultivate the image of Jesus in my life each and every day as I move along the journey of love. In the name of the one who teaches me how to "see" God, I pray. Amen.*