

God Delights in You

By: Meagan McLaughlin

January 2, 2022. In today's sermon, written by Pastor Meagan and read by Mark Roock, we hear about how God knows every detail of our backstories, and delights in each one of us.

Readings: [Ephesians 1:3-14](#), [John 1:1-18](#)

*** Transcript ***

This sermon was prepared by Pastor Meagan, so I want you to imagine that you're receiving it as a letter. So I would begin with: dear friends. Greetings to you from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When I graduated from college and moved back home, it didn't take long before I joined the church choir at my childhood church. After all, I had always loved singing, and had been in one choir or another since I was in third grade. A fellow choir member, Barbara Lynch, had been part of that church since before I was born, and she began to tell me stories of things she remembered from when I was a kid, running around the halls of Our Lady of Grace Church and School.

One of the stories she told me had been shared with her by my grade school music teacher, George Carthage. On his last day with us before retirement, Mr. Carthage asked what we wanted to sing, and we chose our favorite, The Holy City. Although I hadn't thought about it in years, I instantly remembered the day — and the song — she was talking about. “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, lift up your gates and sing, hosanna, in the highest, hosanna to your king!” Over, and over, and over we sang it, until we were tired of it — which I imagine probably took us much longer than it took Mr. Carthage. As I recalled it, I realized that that day was one among many that fed my love of singing over the years.

A few years after Mrs. Lynch reminded me of that day with Mr. Carthage, one of my cousins had a child who was the first baby in the family in many years, and my Aunt Kate said to all of us, “You see how excited we all are about this baby, how everyone wants to hold and love and talk to him? I want you to know that we did that exact same thing with every one of you. We love you all that way!”

I had taken it for granted, up until then, the profound gift of having people in your life who know your backstory. People who can remind you of events and experiences that you had forgotten, who in some ways know you better than you know yourself. How important it is to have, or have had, people who knew you and looked on you with love, even before you were born.

Each Christmas, we tell the story of Emmanuel, God with us in the flesh, remembering that God came to us in Jesus into the middle of human history to reveal the radical unfailing love God has for us. And today, on this second Sunday of Christmas, in the Gospel of John, we hear those ethereal words that remind us that Jesus, the Word, was present and moving in the world long before that night in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God All things came into being through him.” We don't often think about it, but this is so profound, isn't it? Christ was there, in and with and through God, from the very beginning of time. There isn't a single thing that has happened since creation that Jesus was not intimately a part of. All life came into being through Christ, who then came to us in Jesus. He was formed in Mary's womb, and she labored and gave birth to him

in a stable in the tiny little town of Bethlehem.

In Jesus, we know that there is nothing that has ever happened in our world or our lives that God does not know and care passionately about. Mrs. Lynch, among others, was able to share a slice of my childhood with me, but God knows our entire backstories, and us, better than we or anyone else ever will. Jesus came to show us that, just as my parents, aunts, and uncles poured love over each and every one of us in turn, so God delights in each and every one of us. Think about that for a moment. God delights in you!

The story of God coming in Jesus is a story of a love so abundant that it surrounds and fills all of creation. Remember the Ghost of Christmas Present from *A Christmas Carol*? He brings Mr. Scrooge to all corners of the earth: a ship deployed on the ocean, a remote lighthouse, suburban streets, a deep mine, and a hospital. If we were to follow the Spirit today, we might find ourselves with people fleeing violence, poverty, and death in a refugee camp on our southern border; visiting people sick with COVID in a remote African village or in India's Maharashtra; or with those who are unhoused on the streets of St. Louis. The Spirit would likely bring us to those in prison in our own city. When the ghost and Scrooge arrive at Bob Cratchit's home in a poor, forgotten neighborhood, Scrooge asks why they are there, and the ghost replies, "It's Christmas here too, you know!"

God came in Jesus to an unmarried young woman in a stable in a tiny little town to show us that they are present everywhere, perhaps especially the most forgotten places. No one is invisible to Christ, who intimately knows and sees and loves all people, and all of creation. There is no one God does not see and delight in.

This is the gift and the call of Christmas. God knows every detail of our backstories, and delights in each one of us, and every one of us. And we are created to embody that love in the world the way Jesus did, to see and love the forgotten ones, wherever they may be. God delights in you! What greater gift could there be to share?

Amen.

So writes our pastor, Meagan McLaughlin, and we too say amen.

*** Keywords ***

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