

Sermon for the First Sunday after Christmas Day

December 28, 2025

The Rev. Canon Raymond Raney

Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

Los Alamos, New Mexico

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Psalm 147

Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7

John 1:1-18

If you were following along  
you may have noticed that the words I read  
were not the same as the words printed in the bulletin.  
I read the King James Version because I prefer its poetics,  
but also because I see greater meaning in its translation.

We begin to understand what John means when he writes of the “Word” when we remember that the Greek word “logos”  
means far more than the simplistic understanding of letters  
put together to form the symbolic expression of text.

Logos is the divine conversation,  
the cognitive relationship between human and divine,  
the reasoning, the comprehending,  
the relational grasp of concepts  
that mean more than mere words can express.

The logos is the light come into the world,  
and I prefer the King James’ response of the darkness  
than that given in our lectionary.

In the New Revised Standard Version translation  
“the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” But in the translation I  
read, “the light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness comprehended it not.”

We are the darkness, and we do not comprehend the light.  
The light, the Word, brings the love of God into this world.

You see, love is what the power of God brings.  
Love is not what power gives.

Tomorrow we observe the Feast of the Holy Innocents.  
In our Christian calendar we mark the day that Herod’s army  
slaughtered all the male children under the age of two  
in the area of Bethlehem.

What kind of mind would consider such an act?  
But it happened before and it has happened since.

I went to a Bible study last week,  
and we began talking about all the violence in the Old Testament,  
and how Christianity had become so violent through the ages.  
The questions were flying about how this could happen.  
The comment about Isaiah's words:  
"I will not keep silent or rest until vindication and salvation  
shine out like a burning torch"  
was "I think it's overdue."

This Christmas, for the first time in two years,  
the Holy Eucharist was celebrated in Bethlehem.  
Thousands gathered in the place that had been closed to Christians  
because of the war in Gaza. A cease fire hold the promise that this terrible war may come to an end.  
Likewise, for Ukraine negotiations are under way holding the promise  
that terrible war may come to an end.  
We can only pray.

The slaughter of innocent blood shows no signs of ending.  
We see repeated age after age the slaughter of innocents  
under the labels of genocide and ethnic cleansing.  
Slaughter upon slaughter.  
How long, O Lord, how long?  
We desire justice. We desire peace.  
We pray that the voices of the innocent be heard.  
Those voices, like the Scripture says, cry out in the wilderness.

Isaiah wrote about that desire for justice and the coming of the light  
as the vindication of Jerusalem and the light of salvation.  
And Paul writing to the Galatians  
foresees the light of Christ as the personification of faith.

Paul's talking all about the light being the coming of freedom and salvation.  
"Now before faith came..." he writes,  
we were bound by the law,  
but now we are freed as heirs  
of the promise of the inheritance of the Father's love.

Paul writes of the promise in the section  
that is left out of the reading today.  
In the section that portion of the letter to the church in Galatia  
we hear that for Paul:  
"in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith."

The reality is that in the light and love of Christ:  
"There is no longer Jew or Greek,  
there is no longer slave or free,  
there is no longer male and female;

for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

And just as the chosen people are children of the promise,  
so “if you belong to Christ,  
then you are Abraham’s offspring,  
heirs according to the promise.

The promise is that we will not be forever surrounded by darkness.  
As our lives grow fuller into the light of Christ,  
we see more clearly and watch as the darkness diminishes, little by little.

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest,  
talks about God loving the world so much,  
but that over the years we grew to fear God  
for all the wrath attributed to him in the Old Testament.  
God sent Christ into the world  
so that we might see the loving face of God in human form.

In the darkness we wait to see the loving face of God.

Love is a gift.  
It is tangible.  
It is real.  
It is the Word  
born of Mary.  
The Logos of God, which has spread to all the world.  
It is the gift we share with each other.  
The love of God for all God’s people.

John 1:1-18 King James Version

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
**2** The same was in the beginning with God.  
**3** All things were made by 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** And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.  
**6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.  
**7** The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.  
**8** He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.  
**9** That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.  
**10** He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.  
**11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not.  
**12** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:  
**13** Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.  
**14** And the Word was made 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.  
**15** John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.  
**16** And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.  
**17** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.  
**18** No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.