

The Day the World Turned

Rev. Dr. Leah Grundset Davis
Ravensworth Baptist Church
December 24, 2019
Luke 2:1–20

During this season of Advent in the church, we've been waiting and preparing. Each week, we've lit the candles of the promise of peace, hope, joy, and love. Tonight, we've lit the Christ candle—a physical, reminder of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Our theme during this Advent season has been, *The World is about to Turn* and each week we've asked the question..."is this world about to turn to the promise of peace? To hope? To joy? To love?" We've heard from a "worship witness" each week who have shared deep ponderings about the way they see the world turning—or if they do.

As we ponder the beloved story tonight of what it means that God became flesh and moved into the neighborhood, I've been thinking about how small the whole event was originally. With the exception of some shepherds and angels who heard about it in Luke, it sounds like baby Jesus arrived without much fanfare from the rest of the town.

This week, Lourie told me about a painting called "The Census at Bethlehem," by Peter Bruegel. It's an adapted scene—very Middle Ages peasant looking in a small European town. Isn't that what we're all doing though—working to place the miracle in our own time and space?

The painting that hangs in the Baskins home has a scene of a bustling town, a long line of people and in no way is your eye drawn to the woman on a donkey and man next to her. I had to search the scene before I found where they were.

As Lourie suggested, you see that so much was happening in the town that first Christmas Eve, that life was bustling about like any other normal day. Other babies were being born, people were sick, people were in line for the census, some were eating with families, others were out running errands. And there in the midst of it we find Mary and Joseph.

It's quiet. It's not a loud production. And if you didn't look closely, you might miss it.

I think that's how God tends to show up in our world. God is always being born and turning the world toward God's dreams when we witness hope, peace, joy, and love at work in the world.

Sometimes the world is turning and we can't even see it. Because it's happening in stables in Bethlehem and hospital rooms in Tysons Corner and living rooms in Annandale, and churches in Cuba. It's happening in rooms that works against the empire of today. And we can't see all of it and don't know all of it.

God is showing up with 14 year-old girls caring for creation and with farmworkers in the fields. God is showing up when we work for justice and religious liberty for all people. The essence of Emmanuel, God-with-us, is near us when we are together in community living out who we are called to be, and near us when we are by ourselves, living out who we are called to be.

Richard Rohr has a famous quote where he says, "God loves things by becoming them."

This normal, quiet, albeit extraordinary day in Bethlehem when Jesus was born was the Day the World Turned and most people didn't even know it when it happened. Imagine all the ways God with us has come and the world has turned since then and we haven't all known either! God loved us by becoming flesh and moving into the neighborhood.

That's the good news. God with us has come, God with us is coming, and God with us will come again.

Merry Christmas!

Thanks be to God. Amen.