

Sermon: Christmas Day Reflection

Year A, Christmas Day

[Isaiah 52:7-10](#); [Psalm 98](#); [Hebrews 1:1-4,\(5-12\)](#); [John 1:1-14](#)

Offered December 25, 2016 to Brookline Community Church, Brookline, NH

Rev. Catherine A. Merrill

My dad is one of six so Christmas morning was mostly spent at my grandparent's house with all my aunts and uncles. Until my sister had kids, and then we spent Christmas morning at her house, which was overseas in Scotland or Hong Kong. Christmas morning has always been wonderful for me. But it has also been a morning of waking up in a sleeping bag on my aunt's bedroom floor or in a guest bed. Then waiting my turn for the bathroom to brush my teeth with the weird toothpaste that was available in the little travel sized tube. Christmas morning has not been an out of body experience for me. It's been a super, in-body experience, because many things I was used to just weren't there. Plus I was allowed to eat chocolate out of my stocking for breakfast which was just crazy.

The reading from John today tells about Creation. About how the Word was there from before Creation, how the Word was part of making the most basic pieces of creation, like life and light. *The Word was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.* (John 1:10)

We think of knowing words as something we do with our brains, maybe by looking stuff up in dictionaries. But the words we really understand, like "love" or "loneliness" or "patience", we understand with our bodies. Think of something you really know, like cooking or preparing taxes or flying a plane. When I say "aileron" you can tell I'm not a pilot. I know that it's a moveable edge of a wing that helps you control the plane. But I don't really know what it means. Not with my body. Not the way I know what "cream together the butter and sugar" means when you're making cookies, how there's a moment when the pressure on the fork changes and it's time for the vanilla and egg.

So if we are to receive him, to believe in his name, to become children of God, born not of blood or of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-12), we need to be open to the Word not just with our minds and even our hearts, but with our whole bodies. God understood that to such an extent that *the Word became flesh and lived among us* (John 1:14). Because those times when we understand words down in our bones, like "fear" and "loss" and "alone", those are the times when the Word, the *Word was with God, and the Word was God* (John 1:1) holds us to his heart, like a infant resting on his mother's bosom.¹ (John 1:18) *From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace* (John 1:16), in our hearts, in our souls, in our bodies. What a gift to find on a Christmas morning.

¹ Karoline Lewis, *John: Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentary*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014): 21.