

# Palimpsest\* (pa • limp • sest)

Week of **December 19, 2021**  
Fourth Sunday of Advent

**Sermon:** Glimpsing God In Us  
**Scripture:** John 1:18

## Sermon Supplemental Reading

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Here in time we make holiday because the eternal birth which God the father bore and bears unceasingly in eternity is now born in time, in human nature. Saint Augustine says this birth is always happening. But if it does not happen in me, what does it profit me? What matters is that it shall happen in me.

- Meister Eckhart, 13th/14th century German mystic

The phrase “deep incarnation,” coined by Niels Gregersen, is starting to be used in christology to signify this radical divine reach through human flesh all the way down into the very tissue of biological existence with its growth and decay, joined with the wider processes of evolving nature that beget and sustain life. From the beginning God had the character of being a friend of the material world in its full scope, he observes, creating matter, appreciating that it is good, and even declaring that human beings made of the dust of the earth and divine breath were the image of God.

Now incarnation enacts a radical embodiment where the Word/Wisdom of God joins the material world, sharing in the conditions of the flesh in order to accomplish a new level of union between Creator and creature. The early church axiom that “what is not assumed is not redeemed” carried the insight that it is essential for the divine self-embodiment in Jesus Christ to encompass all that belongs to the creaturely human condition, or else it is not saved. Deep incarnation extends this view to include all flesh.

In the incarnation Jesus, the self-expressing Wisdom of God, conjoined the material conditions of all biological life forms (grasses and trees) and experienced the pain common to sensitive creatures (sparrows and seals). The flesh assumed in Jesus Christ connects with all humanity, all biological life, all soil, the whole matrix of the material universe down to its very roots.

- Johnson, E. (2014) *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*

\* A Palimpsest is: 1: writing material (as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times, 2: something having unusually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface

The Word, for our sake, became poverty clothed as the poor who live off the refuse heap.

The Word, for our sake, became a sob a thousand times stifled in the immovable mouth of the child who died from hunger.

The Word, for our sake, became danger in the anguish of the mother who worries about her child growing into adulthood.

The Word cut us deeply in that place of shame: the painful reality of the poor.

The Word blew its spirit over the dried bones of the churches, guardians of silence.

The Word awoke us from the lethargy which had robbed us of our hope.

The Word became a path in the jungle, a decision on the farm, love in women, unity among workers, and a Star for those few who can inspire dreams.

The Word became Light,

The Word became History,

The Word became Conflict,

The Word became indomitable Spirit, and sowed its seeds upon the mountain, near the river and in the valley, and those of good will heard the angels sing.

Tired knees were strengthened, trembling hands were stilled, and the people who wandered in darkness saw the light...

The Word became the seed of justice and we conceived peace...

The Word made justice to rain and peace came forth from the furrows in the land.

And we saw its glory in the eyes of the poor transformed into real men and women.

And those who saw the Star opened up for us the path we now follow.

- Esquivel, J. (1982) "Those Who Have Seen the Star,  
*Threatened With Resurrection*

## **Questions**

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- How does the incarnation happen in you?
- Does this change the way you think about your body?
- Does this change the way you think about other people?