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12/24/2021

### “I Chose You”

One night, as I was tucking in Libbie (our 4 year old daughter), she looked up at me, grabbing my hand, and saying with both joy and certainty in her voice “you chose me mommy!” Slightly confused, and completely overcome with awe at her statement, I said, “of course, I chose you Libbie.” Since that night, the story of how I “chose Libbie,” has grown to become an extravagant tale, and Libbie’s own version of her “birth story”. Which she loves to tell and retell on car rides, at bedtime, or whenever the mood strikes her. “You picked me that night.” She’ll say, “Why?” “Because,” I always reply, “I knew I wanted you in my life.” “And you saw me, right mommy.” “Yes, and I knew, I knew I loved you. And I chose you. And, I choose you everyday.”

Tonight, we hear our ever familiar nativity story, of Mary, who, as Luke tells us, “gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger.” And, while this is a beautiful story that has inspired brilliant pieces of renowned artwork, adorable and painfully long pageants, and an insanely large array of nativity scenes. Just like the story of how I chose Libbie, it leaves much to the imagination. I mean, let’s be honest here, anyone who has gone through, seen, or even heard the story of a birth, knows there is a lot more to it than, “The time came ... And she gave birth.” There’s a lot more. But, in the interest of time I won’t get into all those details here and now. We may not be made privy to the play by play of Jesus’ birth story, but there is still immense beauty in what our incarnation this night truly means for us. An incarnation that involves the literal life threatening vulnerability of a laboring mother, and a human birth, as well as the immense fragility and complete dependency of a newborn baby.

While Libbie refers to “My choosing her” as being a one time event, any parent (or for that matter anyone in a committed relationship with another human being) knows that it is a daily, hourly, moment by moment commitment to choose another. To choose to be a part of the pain and the beauty of scraped knees and kissed boobos. The sorrow and joy of emotional meltdowns and milestone moments. The significant loss and extraordinary love of knowing you're giving your heart away to another person who is just as apt to the frailty of this human condition as you are. And, this right here is the beauty of our Christmas story. The continued story of how God chose us.

We may not be made privy to the intimate details of the Divine’s birth story, but Luke is clear this birth is good news. Because it means that God chose us. There is this idea, in the Christian faith, that we have a God of the Old Testament, evoking fear as a wrathful deity angry at our sinful and broken nature. And a God of the New Testament, evoking love as a benevolent and grace filled deity come to save us from our inevitable fallibility. But, the truth, and the beauty of the matter is, it’s the same God. Not unrelentingly condemning or affably condoning, but moving, bending, and constantly present to God’s own creation. Because, God chose us. And, in God’s choosing God became incarnate. Taking on the form of dividing cells, a growing fetus, a newborn babe, an angst teen, another face amidst the crowds.

As we hear the angels proclaiming to the shepherds, “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” He is saying God chose us! While the birth of the Divine in the form of the baby Jesus took place in a particular space

at a particular time, the incarnation itself is not a singularly occurring event. God did not just choose us only on that day. God chose us from the very beginning as God created us in God's image, spared Noah and his family from the flood, led the Israelites out of Egypt into the promised land. God chose us Christmas night over 2,000 years ago being born to a poor, unwed, Jewish teenager, under the power and authority of the Roman empire, in a small backwater town. God chooses us today, making Godself known in all the selfless and loving acts we witness, experience, and take part in. And, God will choose us for ever and for evermore. Tonight, we like the shepherds are being invited to go and "and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." This thing that looks like a life lived for something above and beyond ourselves. Because, that is the incarnation. This is how God chooses us, over and over again.

This Christmas I invite you to claim, with reckless abandon, like my 4 year old daughter, that you are chosen! And, to live it out! Live it out by inviting others in, like Mary who welcomed the Divine into her womb and into her life. Live it out by allowing yourself to be vulnerable to another, like the Christ child completely dependent upon his mother for sustenance, for love, and for survival. Live it out by proclaiming the good news of great joy to those labeled as "other", like the Angels who came to the shepherds in the field. Live it out by going to see this thing that has taken place, like the shepherds going with haste to find signs of the Divine light, life, and love breaking into our world, today and everyday. When we are able to make space in our lives for our chosenness, we make space for the Divine and in turn for one another. In this way we are able not only to go and see, but to take part in the incarnation, as it was, as it is, and as it will be forever! Amen.