

*Color Blindness Makes No Difference!*

Christmas Eve year B 2008

Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

December 24, 2008

**Isaiah 9:2-7** <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. <sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

**Luke 2:1-20** <sup>NRS</sup> **Luke 2:1** In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. <sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The

shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

This year I heard a popular Christmas song and listened to the words with a new ear. You know that there is a difference between hearing and listening. It caught my attention, because I have become more sensitive to a larger world of people, who are more different than I am, from different countries and cultures, yet believing deeply and devoutly in God. The song of which I am speaking is *Some Children See Him Lily White*.

It's OK for me to see him white, but I have trouble after that when you get into browns and shades of color! That's already a problem since I am color blind really. I don't see colors as most of you do. When I took the exit test from the Army in 1971, they showed me a book with a lot of colored dots on each page. As I was standing in line, I saw people calling out numbers as the examiner turned the pages. When I got up there, it was a different story, each page had

a lot of dots but there were no numbers! The soldier looked up at me and said, "*Captain, you are really the first one I have seen who is truly color blind!*"

That makes my appreciation of this Christmas song a little different from you. The words are provocative. Listen.

### Some Children See Him

Some children see Him lily white,  
The Baby Jesus born this night,  
Some children see Him lily white,  
With tresses soft and fair.  
Some children see Him bronzed and brown,  
The Lord of heav'n to earth come down;  
Some children see Him bronzed and brown,  
With dark and heavy hair.  
Some children see Him almond-eyed,  
This Savior whom we kneel beside,  
Some children see Him almond-eyed,  
With skin of yellow hue.  
Some children see Him dark as they,  
Sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray,  
Some children see Him dark as they,  
And, ah! they love Him, too!  
The children in each diff'rent place  
Will see the Baby Jesus' face  
Like theirs, but bright with heav'nly grace,  
And filled with holy light.  
O lay aside each earthly thing,  
And with thy heart as offering,  
Come worship now the Infant King.  
'Tis love that's born tonight!

Bette Midler, Kenny Loggins, James Taylor have all sung this song. It is **provocative**. It begs the question, “How do we see him tonight?” When the staff was discussing this title with me, Bruce made the astute observation, “*Color blindness makes no difference – only matters how God sees us!*” Isn’t this the beauty of the gift of Jesus on Christmas or Easter? He is really **not** lily white. He has a mid-eastern color. His background is not American Caucasian. He is Jewish from a small village. The color of his skin makes no difference. We admire and worship him because of who he is and what he has said and done.

God gives us a gift to turn us around. God has given us this holy gift to restore in us what we have lost. Did we lose sight of his color? I don’t think that makes any difference either. What we may have lost is **our soul**. Deep within us is this **DNA** imprint of the nature of God. We are all God’s creation, God’s children. In the creation story it said that we

were made in the **image of God**. Theologians call this the *Imago Dei*. This very nature of God is **in our human nature**. Each of us is bound together in this holy imprint which makes us all brothers and sisters. We are all children of God, children of Abraham, descendants of a holy promise.

Somehow, we have **lost track of this nature**. As far back as we can imagine, even to the **time of Adam** and Eve when they were allegedly driven from the Garden of Eden, we hear the stories of the Bible that reveal how we humans **have gone our own way** and **said**, in effect, “*nice to have you around, God; but we can do things on our own with you.*” We have even been so brazen as to rely upon our own self-made gods stamped proudly “***Made in the USA.***”

This gift of Christmas is a gift of **redemption**. God knows surely that we **need to know our true humanity**. We have lost this sacred gift. There is the age old question of what shapes us more – Nature or Nurture. The **truth** is that

we are **not made evil**; but we do a heck of a lot of bad things that are destructive to our human family. The Apostle, Paul, calls this the **nature of the old Adam** in us. It doesn't take much to change what was instilled into us in birth. It is becoming better known that a **baby can be greatly influenced for his/her whole life within the first 18 months** from conception. A child **will be what we make that child to be** in large part, though not completely nor irrevocably. Things like smoking and drinking during pregnancy will have an impact on **brain development**. Exposure to pressures of **poverty, violence, and family stress** can retard or even permanently inhibit the brain's development also. It can affect our thinking, our emotions and our relationship for a large part of our life. That is the **effect of nurture**. We are shaped by the forces around us.

A friend whose life has been devoted to these issues says that a **child's IQ** can be affected greatly by just three

negative factors happening at the same time. The IQ could drop at least **ten points**. That is scary. That is the power of our world to nurture us into the people we are, not what we were meant to be. That puts a larger burden on us individually as parents but also on our society to create a better and safer and less toxic environment for raising children. What do you think a child learns from video games that make killing so easy and so real? Games seem harmless but they are the forces that nurture our view of life.

The gift of Jesus is the divine gift of a **New Adam**, a new humanity from which we may be reshaped and restored into the image of God that was intended. We see in Jesus the power to heal hurt, to offer compassion to the downtrodden, and to overcome hate with mercy and love. Then, it will be true that **we are made in God's image** and not the other way around. We **do not make God** in our image, our color or our way. Jesus is the one who gives us

our humanity and he is the one that is the binding force for all. In our differences, God sees no color blindness, no issue with me or you. He **helps you and me to see each other** in a new light. We see each other as brothers and sisters of the family of God. We are one in Christ. That is our Christmas gift in this holy child of Bethlehem. Look on him more closely now and you will see yourself in a new light.

God bless you this on this sacred night to see Jesus in the way that makes you and me what we were **meant** to be as children of God, worthy of dignity and love. Merry Christmas.