

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Dec 24th 2017

“My life flashed before my eyes!”

“That lecture lasted forever!”

“I’m forty already!? Where did the time go?”

We’ve all had these time warping experiences where our perception of time’s passage failed to fit the reality of time’s passage. A certain Time Lord once noted that, “People assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint - it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, time-y-wimey... stuff.”

The Incarnation, God taking on flesh and so entering into Creation, demonstrates how “wibbly-wobbly” time can appear. King David contemplates building a temple for God, but God reminds David of his humble beginnings as a shepherd in the pasture, caring for his flock. It was God who elevated David to care for the people of Israel. All that David has come from God. So David will not build a house for God. Instead, God will “fix a place for my people Israel” and raise up from the house of David a heir: “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.”

Mary fulfills the prophecy with her yes, “May it be done to me according to your word” and so the Incarnation begins.... or so we like to believe. But God’s entering into Creation had already begun. It was always part of the Divine Plan. God is love and the lover always wants to be with the beloved. Thus, God’s desire to be with us goes back to the beginning of Creation and, transcending time, stretches into the far distant future. We see this desire manifested when we recognize God in Scripture, the Eucharist, Creation and one another. The Incarnation has occurred, is occurring, and continues to occur. Time is too wibbly-wobbly to simply constrain God’s enfleshment to one specific time and place.

In another reflection of time’s “wibbly-wobbly” nature, today is the last day of Advent, Christmas Eve, and also (beginning with the vigil Mass) the first day of Christmas time. How will we occupy those few hours in between these two liturgical seasons? Will we spend our time obsessing over last minute Christmas shopping, preparing the Christmas feast or watching another TV Christmas special? Or can we find time to recognize how God is incarnate in our lives right now?

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