

John 1: 1-18

A Long Distant Relationship

November 28, 2021 (Advent 1)

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We have learned the art of long distant relationships these past couple of years.
Since the pandemic we've learned how to bridge the distance between people in new ways.

Teacher & Students

Congregations & Clergy

Families

Through the gift of technology, we have been able to be present with one another – in the room while not being physically present in the room.

This morning, I'd like us to look at this long distant relationship idea with regard to how God has bridged the distance between us and God – by becoming one of us to understand us to know and redeem.

I'd like to do so using what I think is a great illustrative story written by J.B. Phillips.

Phillips has written a brilliant short story called "The Angel's Point of View" (or 'The Visited Planet') ~ it tells the story of a very young angel being shown the splendors and glories of the universe by a senior and experienced angel. During the tour, this young angel begins to tire and become bored with the whirling galaxies and blazing suns of inter-stellar space.

Finally, this little angel was shown the galaxy of which our planetary system is but a small part.

The senior angel pointed to a small, rather insignificant sphere turning slowly on its axis.

It looked as dull as a dirty tennis-ball to the little angel.

Here's how J.B. Phillips envisioned their conversation might go:

Senior Angel (SA): "I want you to watch that one particularly," pointing with his finger.

Little Angel (LA): "What's special about that one?" It looks very small & rather dirty to me."

SA: "That's the Visited Planet."

LA: "Visited?" "You don't mean visited by"

[before the LA could finish the question, the SA interrupted...]

SA: "Indeed I do. That ball, which I have no doubt looks to you small and insignificant has been visited by our young Prince of Glory."

LA: "Do you mean that our great and glorious Prince, went down in Person to this fifth rate little ball? Why? Why should He do something like that?"

SA: "It isn't for us to question 'why's', except that I must point out to you ~ He is not impressed by size and numbers, as you seem to be. But that He went, this I know. As to why He became one of them – how else do you suppose could He visit them?"

LA: (with disgust on his face) "Do you mean to tell me, that He stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures on that floating ball?"

SA: "I do, and I don't think He would like you to call them 'creeping, crawling creatures' in that tone of voice. For, strange as it may seem to us, He loves them. He visited them to lift them up to become like Him."

The Senior Angel then takes the Little Angel on a journey through time. They see little flashes of light from thousands of years ago – times when something of the Father's knowledge & wisdom break into the minds and hearts of people who live upon the earth.

Wondering why they could not hear the Father's voice all the time, the LA asks, "Why are they so deaf?"

SA: "It's easy for we who live in Heaven's splendor & light to question this. For, we hear the Father's voice every day with clarity...like sweet music in our ears. For them, though, there is at times darkness & distraction. But wait & watch – in a moment you will see something truly wonderful."

The earth circled around the sun, and then quite suddenly, in the upper half of the globe there appeared a light, tiny – but with brilliant intensity that both angels had to cover their eyes.

LA: "I think," in low toned voice, "I can guess, that was the Visit, wasn't it?"

SA: "Yes, that was the Visit. The Light Himself went down there and lived among them."

The Senior Angel then explains how the light was later extinguished in the death of Christ – to which the Little Angel surmises, "And that I suppose was the end? For I see the whole earth wanders in darkness."

SA: "Wait," the Senior Angel implores, "we are still very far from the end of the Visited Planet's story. Watch - & be ready, once again, to cover your eyes."

In darkness the earth turned round three times, and then there blazed a point of light with unbearable radiance.

LA: (Shielding his eyes) "What now?"

SA: "He did it. He rose again – on the third day! He conquered the thing most dread and fear their whole lives – He defeated death - & some saw him and become devoted disciples.

Opening his eyes, the Little Angel saw the light – that dazzling light – had gone –for the Prince had returned to His Home of Light.

"But watch," the senior Angel said, "there is still more to the story."

***Where once the dazzling light had been – there was now a bright glow.
As the earth turned ... the light spread out.***

A few flickered then faded out; but for the most part the lights burned steadily, and as they continued to watch, these two angels saw in many parts of the globe there was a glow over many areas.

“You see what is happening?” The Senior Angel remarked, “The bright glow is the company of loyal women and men who follow Him, and with His help they spread the glow and now lights begin to shine all over the Earth.”

LA: (impatiently) “Yes, yes...but how does it end? Do the lights join up with each other? Will it all be light, on earth as it is in Heaven?”

SA: “It is in the Father’s hands. Sometimes it is agony to watch and sometimes it is joy unspeakable. The end is not yet. But now...now, I hope you can see why this little ball is so important. For He has visited it; He is working out His Plan upon it.”

LA: “Yes, I see, though I do not fully comprehend. Yet, I shall never forget that this is the Visited Planet.”

And with that thought, the two Angels closed their eyes in prayer.

“And the word became flesh and dwelt among us” ... “full of grace and truth” ... “and the light could not be extinguished.” – so declares our gospel text this morning.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us, “The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light; those who live in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us...”

...WE are the visited planet...and God is not finished with us...

It is into every corner of the world we go – that we are called to carry this news with us...

So, we find ourselves in the same place we do every year around this time – this Advent time of waiting, watching, preparing, pondering and hoping – we entertain the same question each year this time...will we make room in our hearts to receive the gift of God’s grace – revealed in the cry of a tiny babe –

“Do you have room for the Savior?

Do you seek Him anew?

Have you a place for the one who lived, died and rose for you?

Do you / Do I / Do We ... have room?”