

God is Coming Here Through You (Advent 4)

John 1:1-18

December 20, 2020

First Presbyterian, Luling

A few years ago, the girls and I went on one of our adventures to Longhorn Cavern State Park. It's between Burnet and Marble Falls, out in the Hill Country. "Visit a cavern" had been on our possible list of adventures all summer long, but neither one ever chose it. I think they were a little apprehensive, but it was my turn to choose, and that's what I chose. It was August, and anything that wasn't going to be outdoors in 105 degrees sounded good to me. I highly recommend it. Not as big and not as crowded and not as touristy as Natural Bridge Caverns. And a fascinating history, including as a literal underground speakeasy during Prohibition, an ammunition stash during the Civil War, and a potential safehouse for LBJ in case of nuclear attack.

We made our way through the cavern, learning about those historical tidbits—more interesting to me than to the girls—and about the exodus of Mexican freetail bats from that cavern, and about the teeny weeny bats whose name I no longer remember, who now inhabit it. We saw some of them, and they're about the size of your thumb. Cute, if a bat can be cute.

We walked deeper and deeper into the cavern. The air was cool and damp. The floor was wet and slippery. As we walked, the guide flipped light switches on ahead of us and then off behind us, so as not to disturb the wildlife any more than necessary. When we were deep in the cavern—I don't mean deep down, just far away from where we had entered—he told us all to stand still, that he was going to turn off the lights. And he did. And each girl grabbed one of my arms and squeezed tight. Because it was really, really dark. I couldn't see anything at all. No reflection or glimmer of anything. We don't experience that kind of darkness very often. Stars and moon, not to mention electric lights, compromise our darkness. This was absolute, absolute darkness. It wasn't inherently scary, I didn't think, but the completeness of it was unsettling and awe-inspiring at the same time.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

In that deep darkness, one little tiny speck of light would have been visible. I was searching for one, looking for one. It only takes a tiny bit of light to show in the darkness. And it doesn't work that way in reverse. The darkness isn't visible in the light, not in small quantities.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

The light, the light of the world, was coming into the world. And even when the world is full of darkness, that light is here. Sometimes the world seems pretty dark, but it is never absolutely dark, because the light came, and the light shines in the darkness, and where there is light, there is not complete darkness.

The Word became flesh, and lived among us. The light shines in the darkness. The Word, the light of the world, became flesh and lived among us. The Message version puts it this way: "God moved into the neighborhood." It's more intimate than that, though. Closer than I've ever been to any of my neighbors, even the really good neighbors we've had through the years. God didn't just move into the neighborhood. God moved into our hearts, God's light in Jesus Christ shines in and through us, not just from outside us, but from within us.

I'm struggling with how to say this, because I'm not wanting to say that everyday, ordinary humans are divine like Jesus. But Jesus coming as the Word made flesh, God becoming human in Jesus Christ, does mean that our humanity can demonstrate and show and make real the love of God. Jesus made that possible. Our human-ness, even with all our foibles and shortcomings and ordinary-ness, can demonstrate and show and make real the love of God.

That's how the Hey Mary song can proclaim that God is coming here through us. Just like Mary, we're bringing God in Jesus Christ to the world. Because if God can come here through an ordinary girl, an ordinary person, an ordinary human being, then God can come here through us too. God can move not just into our neighborhood, but into our hearts.

And when the light needs to shine in the darkness, and boy howdy if we don't need a bit of light in the darkness right about now, then we need look no further than ourselves. That light is going to shine in and through us. We have known—and do know--that light in the love in Jesus Christ. We shine that light when we share Christ's love in word and deed. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

And to close out our Advent, let's listen again to the Hey Mary song. God is coming here through you, today and every day.