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Grace Episcopal Church, Galena  
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So, it seems there is more than one way to tell the story of the Incarnation, the almost unimaginable truth that the Word became flesh and dwells among us. We have told the story through the stable after the long trip to Bethlehem. We have told the arrival of the fragile newborn child who needs our help to live. Today we hear it in the poetic lines from John.

If the Word can become flesh  
and we know it can, truly,  
because it did (We testify to it by our lives.)

Then in our flesh we can become  
bearers of the Word  
and we know that to be true  
because we see it in others.  
(I have heard you talk of this, the  
unexpected call or welcome hug,  
one who keeps company with you during heartbreak)

The best answer to this poetic reckoning from John,  
pealing like one bell to another

Comes from another poet,  
Gerard Manley Hopkins,  
who speaks of in speaking of our best life  
as it reflects who, and Whose, we truly are,

and I quote ÷ the just man justices;  
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;  
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is-  
Christ- for Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
To the Father through the features of men's faces.+

(not black faces only, or blue, or white, or any other way  
we divide ourselves when anxious and fearful,  
but all our faces.)

So dear to God are we. ÷

As Paul says in the letter you heard read  
this morning. %you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a  
child then also an heir, through God.+[Galatians 4:7]

Dear heirs of God; look at us, will you, we come and gather,  
we hear the Word of God

we pray, we shall pray for the Church, the world, the suffering,  
we are fed for our journey  
we go forth to take our place in the world.

So today, this 4th Day of Christmas, here is your assignment:  
Go home,  
or to whatever lovely place that has welcomed you  
this Christmastide

Find a mirror, and stand, or sit, before it.  
Look, without reproach, at your face,  
child of God.  
See Christ playing there.

Nothing more is needed.  
This is *why* we love, *why* we justice,  
*why* we pray, *why* we feed the hungry,  
all in the name of the One we follow  
the One who can be seen through our lives,  
who plays in our faces,  
ah, yes,  
that we do truly pray.

Amen

Isaiah 61:10-62:3  
Galations 3:23-25: 4:4-7  
John 1:1-18  
Psalm 147:13-21