

**WINTER REVELATIONS #4: DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?**  
Rev. Jack Donovan – Unitarian Universalist Church  
St. Petersburg, Florida – Christmas Eve – December 24, 2017

**ORDER OF SERVICE & READINGS** (printed below, after Christmas Message)

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

Now you have heard the Christmas story from the Gospels. It is a picture of enormous scope, with all kinds of questions raised about divinity, royalty, prophecy, humanity, and hope – all in the confines of a stable. As we hear the story together and picture it individually in our minds, I find myself wondering, Do you see what I see? Do you see what I see in this stable?

I see a pregnant young woman, eyes wide with excitement and discomfort but no fear. She does not know what is coming, and yet, in her way, she really does. I see a watchful tender man, eyes fastened on the woman's every change of position and expression. He is so absorbed as to be in that state of worship, where all reality comes down to a single point. And within the woman, beneath her robes, beneath her hovering hands, I see a baby who is sensing that something is coming, but does not know that it is itself, the awaited one.

That's what I see on Christmas Eve.

Do you see what I see? No, not exactly, of course. We each have brains wired somewhat differently, neurons storing somewhat different memories, synapses firing somewhat differently, processes organizing memory and judgment and response somewhat differently, needs and drives orienting us somewhat differently, unconscious family and cultural heritage foregrounding parts of the story differently.

And yet you and I have a shared ancestry of consciousness and conduct that goes back perhaps two and a half million years, by which we have brought the generations of children into the world as holy infants – holy to us, certainly, because they are so themselves, yet so close to God, and yet still so wonderfully, disturbingly dependent upon us.

I think you do see what I see, on Christmas Eve and anytime new life brings light-emitting eyes into the world – and anytime new light brings life-emitting eyes into the world. I think what you and I see is salvation. We see, in the coming of new life, that hope lives, joy lives, peace lives, love lives. We see our children bringing us goodness and light.

If we can learn to see the goodness and light in every child, and in turn help them to see, we will be the stars dancing in the night – and all our Christmases will be merry and bright.

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## CHRISTMAS EVE 2017

CHRISTMAS MEDLEY      Teresa

SOUNDING OF THE BELLS      Bell Choir

**Jack:** Good evening! Peace be with you and with your spirit!

**Alisun:** It is the best of times for some; it is the worst of times for others.  
But a spirit of peace lifts every heart.

**Karen:** And the spirit of Christmas is the spirit of peace –  
and more, of a generosity that blesses us now with thanks  
and blesses our future with hope.

**Alisun:** Now pretend to be chilly if you can, and rise in body and/or spirit,  
and see through the clear air what you can see,  
as it is foretold in our opening carol, #226, *People Look East*.

\* **CAROL #226**      *People, Look East*

**Karen:** And as Marissa and Michael gives our chalice new light, let's read our words of light:

\* **CHALICE LIGHTING** (unison)

*In the beginning was the light  
and the light was the life of the world.*

**Karen:** *Whoever welcomes in the light, to them is given the power of life.*

### LESSON

Matthew 1: 18-23 – *Found to Be with Child*

**Jack:** A reading from the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 1. Tonight, as we tell the ancient Yuletide story, place yourself in it, and ponder the influence of your dreams and of the light and shadow they cast upon the turning of your days:

*"When Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child. Joseph, being a righteous man, but unwilling to expose Mary to public disgrace, resolved to dismiss her quietly. But an angel appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, which means He will save his people who are lost. As the prophet has said, See, a maiden shall conceive and bear a child who shall be named Emmanuel – God is with us.'"*

**Jack:** With hope that each of us will welcome in the flow of power that graces the universe –  
let us sing the first verse of hymn 225 – *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*:

**CAROL #225** (v. 1) *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

**LESSON** Luke 1: 26-38 – *Hail, Mary, Full of Grace*

**Alisun:** Asking, “What visions have captured you in your youth & do they tell you who you are & what you are to do?” – hear this reading from the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 1:

*The angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth in Galilee to the maiden Mary. And he said to her, ‘Hail, Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.’ And Mary, was bewildered and wondered what to make of it, and the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have received the grace of God and will conceive and bear a son by the Holy Spirit, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and of his realm there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be? I am a maiden.’ And the angel said, ‘Nothing is impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’”*

**Alisun:** With thanks for the dreams and visions this season brings, let’s rise again in body and/or spirit and sing the first two verses of Joy to the World, #245:

\* **CAROL 245** *Joy to the World*

**LESSON** Luke 1: 39-47 – *My Soul Magnifies My Source of Being*

**Karen:** I am uncertain: are there not things that are impossible in this world, even for divine power? Is there always triumph? Does not even triumph have times of travail, struggle, hurt, doubt, even failure? Will there always be heroes? Will it be you? Or me? Or who? A reading from the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 1:

*“In those days, learning of her relative Elizabeth’s pregnancy, Mary set out with haste to the hill country above Jerusalem and came to the house of Elizabeth and her husband, the temple priest Zechariah. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child in her own womb, who would someday be called John the Baptist, leapt up. And Elizabeth was filled with a holy spirit<sup>2</sup>and exclaimed, ‘Mary! Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’*

*“And Mary laughed with delight and replied, ‘My soul magnifies my God and my spirit rejoices in fulfillment of the grace given even to God’s lowly servant. All generations hence will call me blessed, for the Mighty has done great and holy things for me, blessing generation to generation, humbling the proud, scattering the powerful, lifting the lowly, filling the hungry, emptying the rich, remembering his servant Israel.’”*

**Karen:** Can you hear the call? Can you read the signs of the times? Are they of terror or glory? Are they for us or against us?

**CAROL 241** *In the Bleak Midwinter*

**LESSON** Luke 2: 1-7 – *In Those Days, A Decree*

**Jack:** Are there not mighty powers that influence our lives? Are they empowering or over-powering, adding joy or sorrow? A lesson from the Good News According to Luke, chapter 2:

*“In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph went from Nazareth in Galilee to the city of David called Bethlehem in Judea, because he was descended from the house & family of David. He went with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”*

**ANTHEM** (Choir members) Carol of the Angels

**LESSON** Luke 2: 8-16 – *In That Region, Shepherds Keeping Watch*

**Alisun:** A reading from Luke, chapter 2:

*“In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel stood before them and glory shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for see—I bring you good news of great joy for the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in swaddling cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace and grace to all!’ “*

**ANTHEM** (choir members) Watchman, Tell Us of the Night

**LESSON** Matthew 2 1-2, 8-12 – *Where is the Child?*

**Karen:** A reading from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 2:

*“In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king the Jews, for we have come to pay him homage.’ King Herod, frightened by the news, & all Jerusalem with him, sent the magi to Bethlehem, having heard that that would be the birthplace of the messiah. ‘Go and search diligently for the child,’ Herod said. ‘And when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay homage.’*

*“When the wise men saw the child’s star stopped above a house, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; & they knelt down & paid him homage. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. When Herod learned of this, fearing the rise of a Persian-supported Jewish king in Israel, he sent soldiers to kill all the children in & around Bethlehem who were two years old or younger.”*

**Karen:** People ask, “Is this just? Is this fair? Is this right? Why does God not send help to all the children?” And the angels reply, “Is it not you whom God has sent?”

**CAROL #244** *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

**LESSON** Luke 2: 17-20 – *When They Saw*

**Jack:** From the Good News According to Luke, chapter 2:

*“When the angels had gone, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which God has made known to us.’ So they went and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.*

*“When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned to flock and field, glorifying and praising God to all for all they had heard and seen.”*

**Jack:** Each night a child is born is a holy night. Let’s rise and sing, *Do You See What I See*. The words are printed in your bulletin:

\* **HYMN** (insert) *Do You See What I See?*

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE** Jack *DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?* (see above)

**Karen:** May each of us shine our light into the world. And may our church help magnify our light. To that end, we take up our offering this Christmas Eve.

**OFFERTORY** Nic, Teresa *O, Holy Night*

**Alisun:** Our Christmas Eve service is concluding. But the twelve days of Christmas are just beginning as we prepare ourselves for the epiphanies that will be our guiding stars through our new year. So as a call to preparation, please rise in body and/or spirit and join in hymn #235, *Deck the Halls*:

**CAROL #235** *Deck the Halls*

**BENEDICTION** *To All a Good Night*

**Jack:** What is the good word with which we might go out on Christmas Eve? You have heard the Christmas story this evening. May it be one of your many Yuletide gifts – and among others, In the spirit of Christmas, to loosely quote Charles Dickens, may you make all times in the long calendar of the year kind, forgiving, charitable, and pleasant, always holding in your spirit lessons from the past, appreciation for the present, and devotion to a future that blesses all Earthkind. The spirit of Christmas -- God bless it and all of us, every one.

Before we extinguish our chalice and sing our last carol, please turn to your neighbor with a wish of merry Christmas and a happy new year.

**Karen:** Please rise once again in body and/or spirit - and if you will, as we extinguish our chalice light, join in the words in the bulletin:

\* **EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE** (unison)

*We extinguish our chalice light, but not our own.*

*May we carry our light of Christmas spirit out into the world.*

**Alisun:** We close with the blessing carol *Silent Night*, #251 in the hymnal – after which you may sit and listen to Teresa’s beautiful Christmas medley or begin to make your way reverently toward coffee and company in the social hall.

\* **CAROL #251** *Silent Night*

**CHRISTMAS MEDLEY** Teresa

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!**

