

Grace and peace to you from the One who was, who is and who will come again. Amen.

It's a New Year.

The turning of a calendar page is a moment when we hold ourselves accountable for the past and also look forward to the future. It's a time when we look back at the past year, at what is now a part of our history – the joys of 2025 – deepened relationships, new homes, new births, new jobs, resolved family tensions; and creeping into our minds is also the list of regrets of 2025 – the opportunities not taken, the moment not seized to say those few poignant words to another; and we move toward making resolutions – some mundane – like vowing to take my calcium pills on a regular basis – others more serious – to improve relationships, to stop spending money frivolously, to be a contributing member of a community.

The Bible readings today point us even further back than 2025 – to before time was even kept, before creation was begun. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. Sacred scripture and other writings give us God's history as a liberator of those in slavery, as the mighty One who waged war on behalf of God's people. History depicts a faithful God even when the people of God are not faithful.

The readings lead us to a review of the time up to when God came as a baby to reveal what Paul in Ephesians calls the mystery of God's will.

God's will did not change –  
God's will was and is still wholeness and justice for people.

God's will is for relationship with our creator and all of creation –  
what changed was the way God revealed this in Jesus.

Jesus was born - giving light and life to all people –  
into the fullness of time.

The weeks before Christmas are called Advent.

They remind us that the fullness of time has already come.

Jesus was born into the fullness of time.

A time that then included wars and poverty,  
earthquakes and destructions – just like we have today.

God's will revealed in Jesus was a grace and mercy to the outcast.

To the one on the fringe of society.

God's will that we are to love our neighbor.

God's will revealed that God's love is for all people.

God's will revealed and interpreted that Jesus was

sent to bring all people together,

to bury division in favor of peace and harmony.

To cross economic, racial, class and gender lines and

bring all who could see the light,

all who could receive the Word in the world together as

one spiritual family,

as God's own people.

Jesus born into the fullness of time meant competing with  
headlines and news, edicts and proclamations.

A fullness of time where it was hard to  
hear the good news that Jesus brought because of  
so much competing for their attention.

Hard to understand, too, when the good news came in a different form,  
person and experience than was expected.

It's not so different today – the headlines this week have been particularly  
grim filling our hearts with pain and tears also.

But, we are told, the darkness could not overcome the light.

The secret, the mystery was revealed at the cross of Jesus – that God is victorious over death.

The best that darkness can put up in this contest with God is not enough to put out the light of Christ, the light of God.

Barbara Brown Taylor writes:

“New life starts in the dark.

Whether it is

a seed in the ground,

a baby in the womb,

or Jesus in the tomb,

it starts in the dark.”

It’s hard when each day the number of deaths in Ukraine, African Countries, Gaza and now Venezuela grows.

Our hearts grieve, just as God’s does.

A look back over the history of God’s activity in this world comforts us in these painful times –

God’s light now shines for all the dead and missing.

It doesn’t take away the pain because this is how we are made – to feel, to be sad.

God’s presence is still being revealed – everyday,

in our midst, between friends and between strangers

when forgiveness, healing and justice happen between us in

our shared lives together as God’s people on earth.

To carry the light is our work now as we are the body of Christ in this fullness of time.

In Paul’s time that meant to bring the good news to Jews and Gentiles.

Once before divided peoples were brought together

in the plan of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

The uniting of Jews and Gentiles in Jesus’ time might be as significant

the peace process in the Middle East or

the resolution of apartheid was in South Africa.

Little by little, the essence of God continues to be revealed.  
Little by little God's mystery continues to be shared with us.

And so, as we look toward the New Year,  
let us wonder what mysteries God will reveal to you and to all of us in 2026.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.