

Christmas Eve – 2008 Is. 9:1-6; Luke 2:1-14

1. I must admit, even I was moved, despite myself.
 - a. The other evening I was watching one of those inevitable “Year in Review” shows on MSNBC
 - b. And they replayed scenes from 11:00 pm Election Night 2008
 - c. When the election was called
 - d. and Barack Obama became the President-Elect of the United States.
2. As I watched the images of cheering crowds,
 - a. People overcome with joy,
 - b. Oprah and Jesse Jackson weeping amidst the throngs in Chicago,
 - c. I was deeply moved.
3. I say “despite myself” however,
 - a. Not because I was not happy about the election;
 - b. But because of this poster I see every time I come out of the subway at 2nd Avenue on my way to Nativity.
 - i. It is a picture of Obama dressed as superman.
4. I say “despite myself” because of photos I have seen,
 - a. Of Obama Silhouetted by stages lights,
 - b. Looking for all the world like he has a halo.
5. I say “despite myself” because so many people have put so much faith and hope in Barack Obama
 - a. That one wonders whether or not he won an election
 - b. Or founded a new religion.
6. But I also say, “despite myself” because,
 - a. Watching those images from six weeks ago,
 - b. I realize the reason for the superman posters,
 - c. The halos and the expression of faith and hope.
7. For if during most of the summer the clouds were on the horizon
 - a. With the collapse of the housing market,
8. If during the fall we heard the distant rumblings of thunder
 - a. In our troubled banking industry
9. If by November the sky darkened
 - a. as financial company after financial company collapsed,
 - b. car companies threatened insolvency
 - c. and the numbers of unemployed began to climb;
10. If all those troubles helped to push America into making an historic choice on November 4th, simply because he wasn’t “the other guy”
11. In the weeks since that choice
 - a. The world has grown dark indeed, and the storm has broken loose.
 - b. The economic collapse has spread around the world,
12. And even many who voted for “the other guy”
 - a. have begun to join the chorus
 - i. singing the praises of Obama in – dare I say it? Messianic terms.
 - b. Hoping that in these dark times
 - i. he will be the light that guides us;
 - ii. the leader who brings peace.
 - iii. He has literally become for many

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1. what his campaign promised: “Change you can believe in”.
13. Excuse me for sounding a little skeptical.
 - a. But such belief is neither particularly American, nor is it new.
14. in the first century there was someone whom everyone looked to as a beacon of light, not just because he promised it; but because he delivered it.
15. After years of war, he brought peace
16. Which after years of want brought prosperity.
17. He was called mighty God and Prince of Peace.
18. People back then did not elect him,
 - a. but if they could have they would have and so would we.
 - b. However, it is not who you think.
19. The person ushered in this era of peace and prosperity this
 - a. was the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus.
 - b. Little wonder he was praised
 - c. little wonder he was worshiped;
 - d. because in the minds of many
 - i. only a god could wield the power he did.
 - e. He was literally change you could believe in; and many did.
20. And thus tonight’s Gospel begins with him.
21. And yet as soon as he is mentioned; he is ignored.
 - a. His power,
 - b. Proclaimed in the way he can command the whole world to be enrolled,
 - c. Becomes nothing but the pretext for the story of Jesus’ birth.
22. Jesus, whose birth is proclaimed by heavenly messengers
 - a. whose birth is accompanied with the light of God’s glory
 - b. whose birth according to Luke is the birth of a true king,
 - i. who will bring true peace.
23. This comparison of Jesus with Caesar
 - i. is not just made at his birth.
 - b. But and again and again throughout the Gospels
 - i. Every time someone called Jesus a lord,
 1. they were comparing him to Caesar
 - ii. Every time they called him savior
 1. they were saying Caesar wasn’t
 - iii. Every time he was called CHRIST which means “the chosen one”,
 1. they were saying that Jesus and not Caesar was king,
 2. and that Jesus, and not Caesar was the one to believe in.
24. It was this comparison that got Jesus into trouble;
25. It was this comparison that got him killed.
26. And that is simply because in Caesar’s world
 - a. Peace and prosperity were the products of power.
 - b. Political power, economic power, and religious power.
27. And Caesar never shared power. That is what made him king.
28. But according to Luke, Jesus
 - a. Was the true king not because he had power over people;
29. After all

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- a. He was born to poor parents in a stable; not royalty in a palace
- b. And His first associates were shepherds, not nobles
- 30. No, Jesus was the true king because he served others
 - a. He brought peace because he forgave others
 - b. He was called savior because he healed others
- 31. This was Jesus' power;
 - a. And he was king precisely because he shared that power with others.
- 32. And told others to do the same.
 - a. So that others might follow his example
 - i. share that peace,
 - ii. bring that healing
 - iii. offer that forgiveness.
 - 1. And thus be a light in a dark world.
- 33. Our world is still dark;
 - a. in fact for some,
 - b. sitting in homes they cannot afford,
 - c. with bills they cannot pay,
 - d. it is darker than ever.
- 34. This past November 4th we put our faith in Senator Obama to bring change and make things better
- 35. And I truly hope he does.
- 36. I mean it can't get much worse.
- 37. But still permit me to remain skeptical;
 - a. not because of him and his intentions;
 - b. not because of us, and our willingness to put our faith and hope in some political leader to save us.
- 38. But simply because change, real change never comes from the top but from below.
- 39. And that is because real change never comes from a change in law or policy,
 - a. But from a change of heart and life.
- 40. It comes according to Luke
 - a. when people respond to the invitation he makes in tonight's Gospel
 - b. and follow Jesus whose power is his service,
 - c. and whose life is an invitation to others share in that service.
- 41. Every one of us here tonight
- 42. has either been directly affected by the gathering darkness
 - a. or knows someone who has.
- 43. ON this night Luke our Church and Christ himself offer YOU that invitation to share in that service.
- 44. To share what you have,
- 45. to give of yourself;
- 46. to work with one another here or in places like it
- 47. so that others are reconciled, healed and forgiven.
- 48. To be, as our president elect is also wont to say, the change we are waiting for;
 - a. to be the light the world needs.