

“Children of the Stars”
Matthew 2:1-12; John 1:1-14
Sermon, 12/23/18

“Are you ready for a pop quiz?” That question, which a few of my teachers, seemed to love, always gave me a queasy feeling. Today I get to ask you: “Are you ready for a pop quiz?” Well here it is.

What makes blood red? If you said hemoglobin, you are correct.

What makes hemoglobin red? If you said iron, you are doing well.

Where do we get iron? If you answered “out of the ground,” you are on the way to being a genius, even though it is not the final answer.

You see, I remember learning some years ago that all minerals originated in the stars. So, in a sense, iron comes from the stars.

Now you might to ask a question such as. Who cares or what do any of these thoughts that have to do with worship? That would be fair enough. The good news is that I have an answer for you. (In fact, I have been accused, more than once, of always having an answer.). The answer is not really my answer. I read it about 15 years ago in an article by Leonard Sweet, who, at the time, was teaching at Drew University Theological School, my Alma Mater. I saved his answer, in case I ever needed it. (Well you really never know when some seemingly trivial awareness may come in handy, do you?). He said: ***We do not have an atom in our bodies that isn't the product of some dead star.*** Every atom in our bodies is mineral based. Which leads me to ask: When the writer of Genesis tells us that God made us from the dust of the earth, did he know he was talking about star dust?

The question actually intrigues me theologically. Being made of star dust may well explain why this season of Christmas is so filled with the image of a star. The symbol, if you will, brings us to our roots, our source of being. It is star dust! It helps us understand why we dare to have faith in anything beyond ourselves. It explains our willingness to believe what we cannot see. It explains why we still love the birth of Jesus stories. In a world as messy as ours is, in a time when many feel lost and displaced, the stories of Christmas and the ***star*** that leads to Jesus, the ***Star of Christmas***, feel like a homecoming, a return to our roots. In recent years I have been drawn to that image. It somehow suggests what the earlier thought of being born of star dust is trying to say, and what our hymn this morning depicts.

***Star-Child, earth-child, go between of God,
Love Child, Christ Child, heaven's lightning rod...***

When we see ourselves as star dust, we see ourselves as connected to everything and everyone else the same. Christmas, returning to Jesus, who insists that we are all kin, that all are family, makes sense. We all share the same roots. The ***Star-Child*** is our brother, as are all his sisters and brothers. Christmas for those who are star filled is in fact our homecoming. It is a reunion with who we are and an affirmation of from whom came.

The image suggested by Leonard Sweet, and our hymn writer, Shirley Elena Murray, is the same as the one suggested by the gospel writer John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being through him was life, and the life was the light all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

As with any couple, the more Barbara and I are together, the more deeply we know our connection is not simply a connection between two people, but between an ever expanding sense of our human family. We know our commonality, as well as our differences. One thing we both recognize is the way we deal with life's uncertainties. She wants to know the ending more than I do. I tend to think that things have a way of working out even without the details. That is not to say I don't worry, because there are times that I do, but usually not for long. Nor is it to say that Barbara worries too much because she does not. It is to say our connection with each other allows us to be different.

Somehow I usually manage to see a bright side. My kids have often accused me of always seeing the bright side and denying the dark side. I have been told I am naive, unrealistic, overly optimistic. Whether any of those insights are accurate is for another sermon. For now, knowing I have star dust in every part of my being, allows me to reply to such comments by noting my approach to life is understandable. ***Don't blame me, I have stars in my eyes. The dust makes me see differently.***

The image of the ***Star***, of being ***star-struck***, bears another look. Believing that God is in the stars, and therefore in us, may sound foolish and simplistic. Yet, it is what makes the reality of Jesus real. It is what makes the stories of Christmas so

compelling. Unless one is *star-struck*, the stories of our God who walks the earth are simply that - stories.

Knowing we are *star-struck*, leads us to know love is stronger than hate, to know that death is always overpowered by life, to know that forgiveness is better than revenge, and to know the truth will always bring lies to an end.

The so-called realists, the skeptics, may have their day. But the truth is that star dust is eternal. The realists and the skeptics have yet to discover the *Star of Christmas*. They have yet to know the truth of John, the truth of Christmas.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him...the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Christmas is a homecoming. It calls us to safe havens, to realities where we let go of unimaginative realism and skepticism. It is a call to admit, in this time and place, that is often scary, that we have a better choice.

Some years ago Nelson Mandela observed that *our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are we not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.*

It is time to reclaim the star dust in ourselves. With it, we will see others as God sees them. With it, we can be the people God intended us to be. We are called to claim ourselves as *star-struck*. With that awareness we can even become partners of an eternally loving God, joining the ongoing act of creating and recreating the world into a truly *star-struck* reality.

We can attend a homecoming on Christmas Day, a homecoming to a brightly *Star*.