

December 12, 2021
Third Advent

John 1:14-18
(The Message)

“Consider Yourself at Home”

“Consider yourself, at home! Consider yourself, one of the family, we’ve taken to you so strong – it’s clear, we’re – going to get along!” Consider yourself, well in consider yourself part of the furniture, there isn’t a lot to spare. Who cares? Whatever we got we share...”

And it goes on from there...but the tone is set. A sense of belonging and hopefulness. We all want to feel at home – and the artful dodger was well on his way to bringing young Oliver into the fold.

This feeling means a lot to us. To know we belong and are accepted is foundational to our well-being. Our focus hymn today is intended to put us well into God’s story in a way that it becomes our story. *Lo how a rose E’re blooming – from tender stem hath spring. Of Jesse’s lineage coming, by faithful prophets sung...*

The one who is coming belongs to the family God will use in the world. This matters because it helps us understand we belong – even in the cold of winter – when half spent was the night.

This hymn can be traced back about four hundred and thirty years. And it has taken many forms. There isn’t just one home claiming this hymn. We have three verses in our hymnal. In the past you may have sung ten to twenty verses.

Most likely, in the early days of its singing – *the rose was Mary*, and the song was about how important she is in the story of our family of faith. Then along came some people we might recognize easily, called Protestants, who felt sure the rose was Jesus. Our rendition of the hymn reflects this. Of course, in the end, ***both Mary and Jesus are important, and it really is “all in the family.”***

The beginning of John’s gospel also seeks to help us find the place of belonging using ideas and concepts his readers would have known by heart. In the beginning was the *word*. And in the fullness of time the word became flesh – and as Peterson says, ***“Moved into the neighborhood.”*** I like that. A very familiar

image for an almost *inexpressible mystery of faith*. God becomes a person – and moves into the neighborhood with us.

But in that moving in – *it isn't we who welcome him* – because there isn't any neighborhood without him. Instead, when he moves into the neighborhood – ***where we are and who we are become truly home***. The one who comes brings us home. The one who comes helps us to know where we belong.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us – and we have seen his glory. *This is the wonder for which we wait in Advent*. The wonder which changes everything. *The wonder which tells us who God is and who we are meant to be* – amid the cold of winter – when half spent is the night.

It is a somewhat unusual image – the rose. But its great virtue is it blooms. It comes to fullness over time – *a fullness which was possible but not present before*. So, whether we are speaking of Mary who said “yes” to God or the incarnate word who is God among us in Jesus – or even ourselves as adopted children of God – ***there is hope and growth with the passage of time and the development of God's purposes***. What a marvelous early Christmas present to ***know God is at work in us; God's presence will bloom in our lives and world***.

John says that from the word for whom we wait in Advent – we have received grace upon grace. It is an image like that of the 23rd Psalm – my cup overflows. More grace than we can ever need. And all this while we *feel less – less than enough*. **But God among us will be enough**. God moves into the neighborhood and changes everything. Who we are – and where we are going.

So, friends, consider yourself at home. Because no matter where you live, God is moving into the neighborhood – and giving us all a place to belong and bloom.