

**Not Some Slight Thing**  
**First Sunday after Christmas**  
**December 26, 2021**  
**The Rev. Katherine Bush**

On Friday we told a story about a small baby in a small place. And today, we're telling a big story that somehow happens in every time and in every place. And it's the same story.

It is hard to talk about the arrival of Christ in the world. Mark's gospel avoids it altogether. Luke and Matthew each piece together what we know of the human perspectives of shepherds and the magi and intertwine them with Mary's and Joseph's stories. And John? Well, John takes an entirely different tack. In the beginning was the Word. In the beginning was the Wisdom of God. In the beginning was the Logos. In the beginning was the Creativity of God. Precisely because it's hard to imagine God being God in the world, Luke and Matthew bring the divine story down to a human scale. And precisely because it's hard to imagine God being God in the world, John blows the story up and beyond the reaches of our beliefs and imaginations.

Instead of letting all these different stories and accounts distract us or feel like contradictions, today they wash over me like a gift. I am glad and grateful that the stories of the arrival of God come to us in small and large sizes.

A few weeks ago in our Advent Unbound conversations, a few of us reflected on our experiences of joy which were, as it turns out, often based on the smallest things - like the taste of a peach on a summer afternoon or other minor moments, rather than the grand events of our lives. Our moments of joy can be quite common experiences, things that anyone and everyone might have access to - not rarefied or all that exclusive. And so also amid all the beauty and swirl of our services on Friday, we were really just gathering, again and again, trying to get a peek into a little corner of a stall where a tiny baby was all wrapped up snug. How common is that? People cooing around a cute little baby, celebrating a new life and all that it portends. Sometimes, joy is tiny - just a few pounds of not much, just another baby being born in the world like the millions and billions of other babies, but still each one precious. Sometimes joy is just a few moments together, just a look. Simple, little, even kinda ordinary.

But then today, we gather and we get a grander story, a more resplendent and dramatic rehearsal of what it's also like when God shows up. "All things came into being through him ...the life was the light of all people ... the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory."

Because sometimes, it's not simple or ordinary at all. Because sometimes, it's hard to get your arms around joy. Sometimes it's not small at all. Sometimes it's like the largest creature on earth - maybe a blue whale, improbably breaking the surface. Mark Doty describes another whale, a humpback, in his poem "Visitation" as "exuberant and playful ... breaching, thrilling us" the onlookers. The blue whale, a gorgeous beast at almost one hundred feet long and weighing up to nearly four hundred thousand pounds - something that could take up a good bit of this nave - somehow lifting itself out of one watery world into the air is no small affair.

And even talking about the largest creature on Earth still doesn't even begin to touch the immensity of God, and of the scope of the joy that God's arrival into the world signifies.

So, we need words like glory and power and light and an unwieldy idea like the Word, like the Word made flesh. It's hard to talk about how God becomes God in the world. Precisely because it's hard to imagine God being God in the world we need lots of stories. Baby sized and all the way up through whales and to keep going, no doubt, to the reaches of our language and of our imaginations. And we need not worry about the contradictions in our stories - not measuring them out and deciding we can only keep certain ideas that line up and match and fit the scale, whatever the scale is? No, we need all the stories, all the encounters - from shepherds and incredulous husbands-to-be, and poets and neighbors, and angels and astronomers, and whale-watchers and maybe you. And whether your story is a big one or a small one, your story of God's arrival into your life is significant and worth telling.

Because Christ's arrival happens in minute and almost missable ways and in immense and immeasurable ways and everything in between. Because joy comes in all kinds of shapes and sizes. Mark Doty ends his poem with this question, "What did you think that joy was some slight thing?" Whether it's small or large, joy is not slight. Whether it's a barely a handful of baby in her arms in a stable or the incomprehensibility of a beast with a heart so big you could walk around inside of it or of the Word and wisdom of God infusing every shimmering corner of the world - even peaches, the arrival of Christ into the world is not a slight thing. So, tell the story - the same story, with all its differences, precisely because it's hard to imagine God being God in the world, we need to keep trying to do that very thing.