

**Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Galatians 3:23-25, 4:4-7; John 1:1-18**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas B; 12.29.24; G. Miles Smith+**

When I was a child, there was a breakfast cereal called *Trix*. It was a very colorful cereal that had a white rabbit as a mascot on the box. Back in the day, that cereal was a lot sugar. No wonder I liked that stuff then—plus I liked the cartoon rabbit on their TV commercials. The advertisers had a clever thing going in the commercials which was enjoyably predictable: Trix—which was the name of the rabbit—was always trying to get some of the Trix cereal, and would disguise himself in various ways to try to fool children to give him some—but then his ruse would be discovered and the children would always say: “Silly rabbit! Trix are for kids!” And the implication—which I think a lot of kids understood implicitly—was that not only was this cereal *not* for tricky rabbits—but probably not even for your *parents*. :) Only...children...could truly appreciate...the glory of...Trix cereal! And that was confirmed in my experience—because my parents would rarely ever buy it for us. :)

I tell this because it has occurred to me that this can be a good segway into approaching John’s gospel reading today. The first chapter of John the Evangelist’s gospel book is actually *John’s equivalent of a nativity story*...and it is so very different from the familiar one read on Christmas Eve...*with a baby born in a manger...and shepherds and angels*. We know that one best, especially as it has been memorialized in the King James Version of the Bible...and is annually presented to us in Christmas pageants with children. *Luke’s version of the nativity story* appropriately invites children...and the imaginations of us all...to the angel’s glad tidings...given to shepherds and to all who will listen. And there is a *shimmering, beautiful quality* to Luke’s story of Jesus’ birth which is reminiscent of a *fairy-tale*. And yet as I spoke at the first Christmas Eve service (1) ...that nativity story is not the kind of fairy-tale which is purely entertaining fiction...but it is the most *true* kind of fairy-tale...one of incredible consolation and joy from God which has become...in some sense...actually real in our world history in Jesus.

*The nativity story of John’s Gospel*...tells of this same incredible consolation and joy from God in Jesus’ arrival...not with fairy-tale-like language...but with the language of *ancient philosophy*. It is a language unrecognizable to children...but any grownups living then...who were even vaguely familiar with the philosophical language of that age...would have recognized that these opening words of John...was telling the nativity story...by talking *philosophy*:

**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... (2)**

In other words, John the Evangelist could have said, as a twist on the Trix cereal commercial: “Silly grownups! *Jesus is not just for kids!*” The story of Jesus can handle our grownup concerns...and take us even farther...than we ever even thought to ask. |

Now, Jesus *does* say “Let the *children* come to me...for theirs is the kingdom of God.” But Jesus is not only for when we were *younger*...or like some *childhood phase* that we need to *outgrow*, like sugar cereal. Jesus is not something that grownups, by virtue of being grownups, must then *leave behind*. |

As it turned out, very soon after Jesus’ earthly life—Jesus began to be increasingly named within all kinds of serious philosophical inquiry and debate. And for John’s gospel to begin by identifying Jesus with...the *Word* “who was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God”... allows us to witness...that for the ancients...the event of Jesus invited the highest philosophical thought possible. Now, not everyone then, or since, has had access to, or aptitude for, such advanced reflections. And yet the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul are full of it.

In the most practical terms, *every grownup* who has ever taken Jesus seriously, may discover *that there is something about Jesus...who makes our life more...intelligible...with him...than without him*. |

It is not that we can understand everything with Jesus...far from it. The dilemma of being grownup is that we will have managed to convince ourselves that we already pretty much know the truth of the world. But part of what knowing Jesus does is to reveal to us just how much we really *don't* understand. Or as the apostle said: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2).

There is an *intelligibility*...that Jesus can bring to our life...which can make it compelling...*to be alive...to endure...to keep searching...to seek to do the right thing...being oriented by what God shows us in Jesus is actually true...good...and beautiful.*  
(3)

"Silly grownups! Jesus is not just for kids!"

And Jesus is not just for people who identify as Christian...or who go to church. Jesus is for anyone...shepherds...wise men...and anyone who is paying attention. But it generally *does* help for anyone who wants to take Jesus seriously...to be among others who are seeking to do the same. (4) And that means that we have to find our "tribe", so to speak, of people who are also seeking the intelligibility of their lives in Jesus.

I hope you are finding that here...and among other trustworthy friends too...where we can keep discovering that it is Jesus...the "Word of God made flesh"...who can make us *true* grownups.

*The true light, which enlightens everyone, has come into the world.  
From his fullness we may still receive, grace upon grace.*

- (1) [https://www.gracekeswick.org/uploads/1/2/1/2/12123187/christmas\\_eve\\_122424b.pdf](https://www.gracekeswick.org/uploads/1/2/1/2/12123187/christmas_eve_122424b.pdf)
- (2) The Greek text actually uses "Logos" which is commonly translated as "Word" but it has a larger philosophical meaning that includes such ideas as eternal reason and intelligibility.
- (3) Another way this could be said is that...knowing Jesus...makes it more possible that we "can truly humanly live, act, suffer and die: in happiness and unhappiness, life and death, sustained by God and helpful to others" (Hans Kung).
- (4) Yet Jesus himself also warned that anyone seeking to take Jesus seriously has to also be careful lest they are led astray by folks who like to talk about Jesus (Matthew 7:21)!