

February 14, Ash Wednesday

Mysteries Revealed

“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

(I Corinthians 4:1)

Mysteries abound in life! In the cosmos, we have quasars, black holes, dark energy....On earth, we have the platypus and the water bear/tardigrade. (Ask someone who went to VBS last year about that animal.) During COVID, we have the mysterious disappearance of toilet paper.... And after COVID, the mysterious disappearance of many of the saints from worship? And speaking of COVID, we are oftentimes befuddled by simply trying to categorize anomalies like a virus: Is a virus *living*?

In the spiritual realm, there are all sorts of mysteries. Why would Eve and Adam choose to sin when they were enjoying perfection?! And why would God choose to forgive – through His mysterious plan of redemption - if it would cost Him pain, suffering, and death – to pay a debt for which He was not responsible? And He would pay that debt – to *Himself*!!

And Christ, Who Himself is called a “mystery” (Colossians 4:3), reveals one small aspect of why God allowed and allows some spiritual things to be mysteries. Mysteries are intriguing! Mysteries are inviting! When we hear about a mystery, we automatically want to know more!

Christ invites people to know more about Him by the mysterious way that God revealed Himself in Christ. At the coming of Christ, God illuminated the heavens – yet in such a way that it did not inspire throngs of people to be able to identify precisely where God would be found. So angels announced to shepherds, that they could find the Babe “*wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*” But that revelation leads to another mystery – why a manger?

So we put the pieces of the mystery together. Jesus is born in “Bethlehem” - literally “the house of bread.” This little town was made famous by a shepherd and king – David. Later the Baby Himself – as a man – would say “***I am the bread of life... I am the living bread that came down out of heaven....***”

God does reveal many clues as to how to solve these mysteries. Those clues are most clearly found in Scripture. But they are also found in signs and symbols: a baby... a manger... the Man who gave us a way to remember Him - sacred meal of remembrance... involving bread and wine. But the mystery is *even more intriguing*: hidden in that bread and wine is the very body and blood of Christ – and forgiveness! It makes us want to know more! The cross and the empty grave solve the mystery of faith.

Prayer: Lord God Almighty, You are wrapped in darkness (Ps. 18), yet You have plainly revealed Yourself in Christ. We thank You for Your many mysteries in creation and in redemption. We are especially grateful that You have revealed the mystery of forgiveness in Christ’s death and resurrection. May we be drawn even closer during Lent to these mysteries. Amen.

(Ash Wednesday, Feb 14 RMF)