

Advent Devotion December 25, 2021

Scripture

John 3:31-36

³¹*The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is above all.* ³²*He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony.* ³³*Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified this, that God is true.* ³⁴*He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.* ³⁵*The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands.* ³⁶*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath.*

Devotional

The Rev. Dave Dack '11

I've heard it said that cooking is an art and baking is a science—which is probably why I prefer baking. When a baking recipe calls for a cup of flour, *it calls for a cup of flour*. The precision is comforting. It's a delicious version of paint-by-numbers. Cooking, on the other hand, leaves more room for improvisation. You can add a "splash" of this or a "dash" of that. My brain struggles with such blatant ambiguity. *How can you add ingredients without measuring?!*

Christmas has been harder for us to measure in the age of COVID-19. Usually we can prepare our gift-giving, family gatherings, and religious rituals with precision, but not during a pandemic. Planning Christmas has been harder, and we may not have the usual indicators by which to measure how "successful" it was.

But perhaps there is some grace in that. Perhaps the absence of a carefully measured Christmas recipe will let us peer more deeply into the holiday's holiness. And who better to help us peer more deeply than John? In our passage, the evangelist carefully invites us into the full meaning of the incarnation: *the incarnation is not only the gift of Jesus, but the gift of God's entire triune life*. In John 3, Jesus is shown to be the *Spirit-giving Son* whom the *Father* loves. The incarnation is thoroughly Trinitarian, which makes possible our adoption into the triune life of God.

No wonder John says that the Son "gives the Spirit without measure." This gift of grace cannot be quantified. The steadfast love of the triune God cannot be measured, and it is precisely its immeasurability that makes it such good news.

Prayer

O generous God, you have given us access, by faith in Christ, into your extravagant grace. You have made us one with your beloved Son and heirs of your eternal life. Forgive our efforts to measure your grace, thereby containing it and making it small. By your Spirit, enlarge our hearts and give us the capacity to serve you with joyful obedience for the sake of your kingdom. Amen.