

Christmas Day

THROUGH GOD'S WELCOME, WE CAN WELCOME OTHERS

John 1:1-14

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Analysis by Peter Keyel

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

DIAGNOSIS: Intolerant

Step 1 Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Not Known*

In the second century, there were plenty of strangers who weren't safe to trust. Romans, Jews, people of any culture different than one's own were potential enemies. Even within the same culture, some people couldn't be trusted if they weren't known. Many people remain strangers to us today, and often we rely on biases that our culture carries about them. We may not know a person, but we are familiar with the stereotypes. We don't know people of other nations, races, ages, ability, class, sexual orientations, or gender identities. This fear of strangers, leads to missing the Stranger in our midst whose birth is here celebrated. "The world did not [and does not] know him."

Step 2 Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Not Accepted*

We don't know these people because we don't accept them, based on our stereotypes and fears. We know what people of a certain nationality (or even state) are like. We know what poor people are like. We come up with plenty of excuses to justify these impressions to ourselves and others. Part of the problem is that we don't accept those whose value systems are different than ours, because it means accepting another value system. Unfortunately, in our Law-bound condition, we also do not accept Jesus' value-system of grace. Notice that the text focuses in especially on us Christians here: "his own people did not accept him."

Step 3 Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Rejected*

We may or may not see exactly where this rejection of others leads. But they know. Death comes to those who are rejected—aided and abetted by our rejection. Discrimination kills slowly in some cases, and faster in others. Our justifications and value systems support this, and we may even

justify it at this stage as God's Law at work on those other sinners. The problem is, we're not above reproach. This same value system of rejecting sinners means we also reject Jesus... to the extent that we will crucify him with the other undesirables on the cross. Of course, this puts us directly in God's crosshairs, and God has a 100% kill rate.

PROGNOSIS: Inclusive

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Owned*

Having witnessed Jesus in God's crosshairs, we see a miracle: Jesus is raised from the dead, and more than that, adopts all of us who reject him. Jesus comes to his own, even though we are the ones who put him on the cross to die. This is "the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Received*

In receiving Jesus, we are given "power to become the children of God." In receiving Jesus, we are adopted into a new value system—one of welcome and love. No longer do we need to fear the stranger. The barriers that separate us...those of nation, race, age, ability, class, sexual orientation, or gender identity...are dissolved as we receive this wonderful power to be the children of God. As Jesus comes to us, so we can come to those whom we fear.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Known*

Without the fears that once chained us, we are free to welcome all people. More than that, we are free to testify to this power and to this glory, just as John does. In testifying and welcoming people, we get to know them. We cross those great gulfs we previously feared, and in so doing are greatly enriched as we get to know other children of God. God's Word becomes flesh and lives in our midst.