“Our All in All”

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen

One of my favorite contemporary theologians is someone you may well have read already yourselves. If not, I cannot recommend highly enough to you the writing of Anne Lamott. Her no-nonsense approach to faith and life is refreshing as she shares her very real struggles through a lens of discovery. Chief among the relationships she opens up to her readers is that of her son. At seventeen, Sam is driving her nuts. He is reluctant, suspicious, and too busy for her. Then, one night after he has finished spewing all his adolescent angst at her, he falls asleep on the couch in the room with her. In his sleeping, beautiful, adolescent peace, she looks upon him and remembers all the stages he has lived through; all the stages she has lived through with him. In doing so she realizes that he is, even in his most awful, trying moments, the baby in her arms and lying on her stomach; the toddler holding on to her fingers for dear life; the kindergartner bravely not looking back when he boarded the bus, and therefore not seeing her own tears. Her son is all that he was and all that he will be, in the moment in which he sleeps—and then when he wakes.

Lamott writes pretty humorously as she struggles to behave well around and in response to her son. She writes, “You’ve got to wonder what Jesus was like at seventeen. They don’t even talk about it in the Bible, he was apparently so awful.” To be honest, I don’t know whether I should cringe at the notion of a disrespectful adolescent Jesus or not, but it’s a funny line.

Walking our way through Advent this year, I have preached about different theological words as we get to know them through the Gospels. This morning, we spoke a bit about the way that God as revealed to us is very different from the God of other faith traditions. God, in Jesus, is *incarnate*, the Advent Word of God for the day. God is not only a distant God to be feared in ever transcendent power. Tonight, we celebrate what is undoubtedly the most exciting, most joyful and also most frightening moment in our combined lives. Our *Savior is born*. Faith Hill sings a Christmas song that repeats, “A baby changes everything.” Indeed it does. Indeed, Jesus changes everything, and not only for Mary and Joseph. Jesus came into the world in a manger, in Bethlehem some 2,000 odd years ago, but also lives today. Jesus both is and is not the baby he was born as. For God, our loving Creator, our loving Father/Mother, Jesus is the baby, is the twelve-year-old unexpected scholar, is the recalcitrant teenager we didn’t get to know. Jesus is also the thirty-something teacher, friend, rabbi and, finally Lord we know so well. Because of Jesus’ birth as an infant, and because of his life, we know joy and we know a path of goodness and light. Then, because of our being able to share with God a way of looking at all of who Jesus was and is, we also know Jesus who was willing to die for our sakes. What is most remarkable, and maybe most frightening because we are *still* called to respond, Jesus is alive today—here in this place and throughout the world, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I believe this. Jesus is alive here tonight in the assembled Body we call the Church. Jesus comes into our lives each day, and sometimes we pause to remember it. Tonight, I invite you to think about the way in which you have known joy, light and love in your life, at any time. And, so, you have known Christ. Here in this church, we celebrate this joy, this light and love every Sunday and throughout the week. Because of the birthday we celebrate today; because of Jesus, the Christ, we are living in God’s time. Thanks be to God!