

Love the Bird  
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The prophet Isaiah is oft-quoted in this season of the church, as his prophetic words are considered to be speaking not only of Israel's situation in, and back from, exile but also speaking of the great act of God to come in the incarnation. From the lectionary reading for today comes Isaiah's word, from the twelfth chapter, is this, "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation...Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."<sup>1</sup> And our hymn says this: "Birds, though you long have ceased to build, / Guard the nest that must be filled, / Even the hour when wings are frozen / God for fledgling time has chosen."

Both Isaiah **and** the hymn point to the same God - the same surprising, almighty, perplexing, omnipotent, unimaginable, benevolent God. We just heard again the story of the birth of an infant, a newborn, a fledgling born at an unexpected time in an unexpected way, yet at the time that God has chosen in the way in which God has chosen. How impractical, we might say, having a baby arrive at a crazy time in a crowded town – surely God could have controlled that better. And how impractical that we say of an infant, "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation." Of an infant we say, "Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel." How impractical, indeed.

But we overrate practicality and would do well to remember what the apostle Paul has written: "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom."<sup>2</sup> We cherish the story told to us by people who haven't yet tuned out the story – who still ask questions of it, who still use their imaginations when thinking about it, who easily sense the mystery and wonder around it – unlikely storytellers and yet perfect. And we worship the one who saw us with God's eyes from the very beginning, never letting go of that deep-down love for us even after seeing / knowing / experiencing our darkest selves. We celebrate the birth of the very same one whose ugly, lonely death we will remember in the not too distant future – had he not been born, he would not have needed to experience that death. In our cherishing, our worshiping, our celebrating, we embrace God's impractical ways. And through our very observation of this season, we re-feel, we remember, we rejoice that God's impracticality includes a love and a forgiveness and a mercy toward us beyond any we could ever deserve. God's impracticality

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 12:2-6, selection for December 16, 2012 from the Revised Common Lectionary

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:25

hatches hope at the least likely time and, by God's power, fledgling hope grows. God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Thanks be to God!

Let us pray: God of surprise, we worship you, we celebrate you, we thank you. Amen.