



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens

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“Tali the Christmas Star”

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A homily delivered on December 24, 2017

At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens, GA

Centering Thoughts:

*Star, a heavenly body, especially a planet, considered as influencing human kind and events.—
Astrology Section, Dictionary.com*

Note: Before the following homily was delivered by Rev. Randall, adults and children presented a play adapted from “Tali the Christmas Star” by Tony Fathman.

Homily:

Let’s have a nice round of applause for our cast!

“Tali the Christmas Star” is not your ordinary nativity drama. I guess it is a bit like George Orwell’s Animal Farm in that it gives life and voice to nonhumans to make a point; in this case, life and voice are given to a burned out comet, an asteroid, a white dwarf, the North Star, and a small dim distant star named Natalis, or Tali. This is more of an astrological story than an astronomy story, and that certainly fits with the awareness of the average person who lived at the time of Jesus’ birth.

As strange as it may seem, I have actually seen Tali, or what I thought of as the Christmas Star. I think I was around 6. My family was living in a small, two-bedroom house near Detroit. All of the houses were close together with frosted windows in the bathrooms to keep nosey neighbors from seeing you doing your business. That Christmas eve, after everyone had gone to bed, I got up to go to the bathroom (and no, I did not peek under the tree!). But I happened to notice a new bright light shining through that frosted glass. I was sure it was the Christmas Star I had heard about in Sunday school. Feeling an intense sense of awe, I crawled back into bed.

We tell stories to transmit and preserve important events and important knowledge. As religious liberals we may tend to shy away from the nativity story because we don’t believe in miracles, such as virgin births, guiding stars or wise folk that must have traveled at supersonic speed to have seen that star and get to Bethlehem in time. So we lose some of the magical awe that I felt at 6 years old. But the reverence of the Christmas story has lasted over two thousand years! Why?

I think the answer is not in the alleged miracles or in the pastoral nativity scene. I think the answer lies in our knowing the rest of the story. We know what Jesus grew up to be! We know that in the destiny of that infant was an unfolding of the pinnacle of humanity. The author of Luke was not wrong to make Jesus’ birth a signal event that called forth adoration and praise. For we know everyone loves a baby, and that particular baby grew up to teach everyone to love one another. Originally, in the Roman Church, Christmas meant the “Christ Mass,” or the celebration

of the Christ and for the gift of God's love and for our love to one another. Each person is special in the eyes of the universe!

Humankind has done a credible job of emulating Jesus' example of loving one another. Yet we are way too provincial. The better I know you or the more you are like me, the more I feel drawn to offer you my love. But what if we're different? Or what if we represent different cultures or nationalities? Or different religions or races?

Jesus never put a boundary on who is our neighbor. We are just learning the other half of the story of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan was the other race, the other nation the other culture, the other religion. The Samaritan in each of us needs to become good to all who are different, to all who need assistance, to all who are human just like us but from somewhere else. To all who need safety, food, or shelter.

Christmas reminds us that miracles really do happen—they happen when we participate in making them happen!

So what did I see that Christmas eve so long ago when I was 6? Late the next night I went out on the front porch and checked to make sure the Christmas star was gone. What I saw was a very bright moon!

Blessed Christmas to all! Amen.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. Do you linger in the dark of night to experience or receive what it can teach? Or, do you banish the dark with light so that any fear or mystery disappears? What prompts your actions?
2. Do you hibernate from or embrace the dark, cold winter months? Share how winter affects you.
3. What do the winter holidays mean to you? Are they filled with joy or sorrow?