

## Blogging Toward Christmas: New people

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*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Harrell's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

I returned to seminary a few years back to hear a professor teach John's gospel as a remake of the Genesis narrative. The parallel between Genesis 1 and John 1 is obvious, but if you press forward, the connections run throughout. The six miracles in John's gospel correspond to the six days of creation. On the sixth day, God makes man in his image and gives him the tree of life; in John, the sixth miracle is God becoming man and hanging on the tree of death. On the cross, Jesus declares that "it is finished," naming his work *good* much like the Creator does in Genesis. And Jesus rests from this work as he lays in the tomb on the Sabbath.

But then, "very early on the first day of the week while it was still dark," the women arrive at the tomb to discover Jesus back at work. New creation has started. It is not something left to the future, but a reality already begun with the resurrection of Jesus. Which is why the apostle Paul could write to the Corinthians, "if anyone is in Christ, you are a new creation *now*, the old is gone, all things have become new"—now.

In keeping with Nativity, new creation can be framed in terms of new birth. Jesus stresses the importance of being "born again" in John's gospel, too. Whether you speak of it as creation or birth, the key, I think, is that we humans are fairly powerless over it. We can be present for birth, and certainly we can conceive it, but its wonder is a sublime reality that we easily ascribe to God.

While in all likelihood Jesus wasn't born in December, it's appropriate to celebrate new birth and New Year's so close together. Keeping resolutions to be *better* people can be easier if we remember that in Christ we are already *new* people.