

Hip-hop mogul, artist and celebrity Sean "Diddy" Combs has the same problem I do, namely that he didn't get to pick his parents.

In a recent interview, Diddy told Perez Hilton:

*I ain't going to lie - if God said I could pick one person to be my father, I'd want to be Sean Combs Obama.*

*That's how dope he is.*

*I hope he reads this interview and adopts me.*

*I wouldn't even have to be in the will.*

*I got my own money.*

This begs the question, of course: Who's your daddy?

The answer, most often, goes a long way toward determining who you are.

Every time I find a half-empty coffee cup I left somewhere or raise my eyebrows in the mirror I begin to see my future strewn out in scrap metal among the scrub oaks of the Southern California backwoods.

If God said I could pick one person to be my father, I'm not sure I'd be wise enough to pick the old man I've got, and certainly not if God had asked me when I was a know-it-all teenager.

What if God gave you a choice?

Who would you pick to be your parents?

It's an interesting question, but moot of course, because picking your own parents is as much of a pipe dream as outrunning death or getting me to sing the preface properly or watching a World Series at Wrigley.

You only get the parents you got.

This was even more of a problem in biblical times than it is now, and with society being so thoroughly patriarchal, the answer to "Who's your daddy?" restricted who you were.

Your father's class and wealth, status and positioning is what determined yours, and if you did somehow pull yourself up by the bootstraps and make something better of yourself, whether through hard work or good luck or some combination of the two, it was your father who got the glory and the praise for it, not you.

Social strata were far more rigid and defined than they are now; the status quo was static indeed.

In a Roman empire obsessed with order, consistency and stability were considered hallmarks of virtue and strength...and the heavens themselves were full of it.

The stars did a tightly choreographed dance through the year, and the power that created and ordered the world, whatever the philosophers or priests decided to name it, was strong and sturdy and stable, an unmovable mover.

The great Greek thinkers had a word for this powerful, faceless force, behind and beyond their pantheon of mercurial soap opera gods, and that word was Word.

*Logos* in Greek, the Word was the ineffable, unchangeable genius responsible for creation, the *immortal, invisible God only wise in light inaccessible hid from our eyes*, as a Christian hymn writer would later put it.

The Word was the starting place for all of reality.

It is also the starting place for John's gospel.

*In the beginning was the Word*, John writes, and the Greeks nod with understanding, and the *Word was with God*, and the cultured Jews raise their eyebrows and listen to this fascinating blend of ideas, *and the Word was God*, and John is off and running on a soaring soliloquy about creation and life and light and all that is so beautiful and orderly and poetic and predictable.

Until it is interrupted by a man whose name was John.

A man who wasn't the light.

A man whose sudden appearance in the song about the Word sounds off-key, a pigeon lost in a convocation of eagles.

He is a foil, a man who testifies to the light by reflecting it, deflecting it, showing it to you by being something else.

It's easier to see this in the Greek than in the English, and in the verbs than in the nouns.

When John writes of the Word, he writes the Word *was*.

When John writes of the man named John, he writes that he *became*.

The man--with the name you can pronounce--changes.

The Word does not.

One is human and vulnerable to change; the other is divine and constant.

John, flickering witness to the Light, is introduced with verbal shadow-play to help you see just how bright and beautiful and *consistent* the Light really is.

It is as reliable and unchanging as the truth that a child cannot pick her own parents.

We humans become; the Word *is*.

We have to understand this stark contrast to hear and appreciate the bombshell that John the writer drops next.

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a Father's only son.*

The unchangeable Word changes into human flesh.

The eagle becomes a pigeon, and pigeon eyes see its glory, the glory as of a Father's only son, which of course is as backwards as the Word becoming anything, much less becoming human, which is to say, becoming so much less.

The Word which is everything actually changes...and that changes everything.

Christmas changes everything.

When the Word becomes flesh, flesh becomes holy; when divinity becomes clothed with mere humanity, humanity becomes something so totally and unimaginably sacred and new and different and valuable and powerful that it is as if a child could pick her parents.

And that's exactly what John claims.

*To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.*

To welcome and to trust this Word become flesh is to receive the power to become a child not just of the president, but of God.

And children of God have privileges, access, status, dignity, prestige, power, a standing and a value that no one can achieve for themselves or for their children.

This is grace upon grace; this is the fullness of the Word for which there simply are no words.

This is why the author of the letter to the Ephesians is so giddy and gushing, trying to speak something so wonderful it would leave anyone speechless.

Redemption and forgiveness and adoption and grace and truth and inheritance are some of the jewels in a necklace too lavish and lovely to describe, the shining qualities of a relationship so wondrous and improbable that it's no wonder the world can't believe it. There is now no ceiling, no limit, no restriction to what we can become because now, thanks to God become a child, we have the authority and the means to become children of God. Now the way we regard and treat each other and ourselves changes when we realize that the Word has so deeply honored us by becoming flesh and living among us. Now the assumed hierarchy of all of reality is gone, eliminated, overcome: if the divine can become human, the human can become holy, the slave can become free, the orphan can become beloved, the downtrodden and discarded can and do deserve dignity... and Diddy can choose God Almighty to be his Daddy and get the inheritance, too. That's the breathtaking glory of that baby in Bethlehem's barn. That's how dope He is.