

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

Christmas Day: December 25, 2024

The Word became Flesh

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Merry Christmas and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on this Christmas morning. I pray that even if this time of year is stressful for you, that you understand that stress is only from human expectations, not from God. God is with us today in thought, word, and deed, the rest is icing on the cake. Today in John's Gospel, we have the real reason for the season, and it is not Santa Claus, holiday lights, or Christmas parties, it's Jesus - the light of the World.

Now I understand the familiar accounts of Jesus' birth from Matthew and Luke that all make a beautiful sentimental story with personalities and background settings, however when it comes to the true meaning of Christmas, the true meaning of why Jesus was born, we need to reflect on John's account.

When one considers those other Gospel accounts, there was nothing really supernatural going on. Apart from the appearance of angels, and timing (being forced into an outside dwelling during a crowded town event); mangers, shepherds and even the wise men are all on the normal side, in a way.

But there is a supernatural reality going on here that John explains to us and it is critical for us to understand, because the non-negotiable reality that we celebrate at this time of the year is that the eternal God, the infinite, transcendent, all-knowing, all-powerful, all present, unchanging, eternal God of the universe became a human being. Yet, not as some glorious apparition, or king with sword in hand. God chose the humble beginnings we all share in common, born of a woman.

This time of year, we sing Emanuel, which means "God with us." That is the essential truth of Christianity, in fact it is the most essential truth of all because it is the only truth that can save humanity. Whereas Matthew and Luke give us the earthly elements and physical historical

features, John gives us the heavenly elements, the supernatural features. The message of Christ the Lord.

Titles are given to Jesus, even at his birth, that belong only to God: the Holy One, the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord of Lords, the Redeemer, Counselor, and of course Prince of Peace. Jesus is consistent with the prophecies and the covenant. And He possesses those non-sharable spiritual attributes; that is, attributes of God's person that cannot be passed on to us, such as the fact that He is eternal, and has power over life and death. Thus allowing Jesus to do works that only God can do: raising the dead, overpowering evil, casting out demons, healing the sick and forgiving sin.

Jesus also received and answered prayer - something only God can do. The evidences of the deity of Jesus Christ fill the Scriptures, but none of them are more powerful than this opening section of the gospel of John. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him."* And the glory of those words often gets overlooked. I think sometimes familiarity causes us to sort of push it away.

But the most concise statement in all the Bible on the incarnation, is about God becoming human, "The Word became flesh." God became a man. The infinite became finite. The eternal One entered time. The invisible became visible. The creator entered the creation in the form of a baby.

Why is He called the Word? Why not say, "In the beginning was Christ"? Why the Word? Because that term, word or *logos* in the Greek, is so loaded with meaning, both for Jew and Gentile. Greeks would read this and they would completely understand what John was attempting to say because in the Greek world of philosophy and religion, the *logos* was believed to be a title given to the creative force, to the ordering, intelligent mind of the universe. The Word has no containment in one faith or philosophy, it is accessible to all.

All of this is to say that whatever your expectations are for this Christmas, first and foremost I hope for you - the knowledge that God lived among us, even though for a brief time in history, a very long time ago, God came to understand our human plight through Jesus.

This is the real reason for the season. Please do not fret if this holiday is less than you thought it should be, do not feel guilty if you are experiencing the holiday season of your dreams. Why? Because God is in all of it. God is in the innocence of a newborn baby; God is in the teen struggling for their independence; God is in the adult trying to make a living; God is in the dying; as Jesus has been through all of our human experiences, the joys and the sorrows, beginning with a day. An ordinary day that became not so ordinary when God chose to be among us in the flesh.

When the tinsel is taken down, and the candles snubbed out, Jesus was still born, God came among us. When the Christmas tree is put in the recycle, and the paper wrappings are in the trash, Jesus was still born. When the days begin to get a little longer and spring begins to unfold, that same Jesus was still born.

Let us remember the real reason for the season. For this day, a Savior was born. *“What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”* Merry Christmas. Amen.