

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**John 1:1 – 18**  
**January 3, 2010**

**Our scripture reading today comes from the first chapter of John's gospel, verses 1 through 18. Listen now for the reading of God's Word for His people.**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

<sup>6</sup>There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup>He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup>John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" <sup>16</sup>From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

**This is the Word of God and It can be trusted. Thanks be to God.**

*Let us pray:*

*Light of life, you came in flesh, born into human pain and joy, and gave us power to be your children. Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us, so that all of Creation may sing new songs of gladness and walk in the way of peace. Help us, guide us and direct us that we may find ourselves focused solely on you this morning as we listen for your Word in our lives. Through the words of my lips and in the meditations of our hearts, speak to us, O Lord we pray. Amen.*

As we move from the birth story in Luke to the beginning words of John's gospel, we see in John's writings the sobering reality that the baby who was welcomed with joy and belief by the shepherds, the wise men and by Mary and Joseph, was in fact rejected by people who did not come recognize him, and as a result of their rejection, they did not receive him. We are told here in verses 10 and 11 that, "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." It is hard for us to imagine that people could ever encounter the Son of God face to face and not received him. However, this type of encounter void of belief isn't very different than those who today meet him and also choose to reject him; than those who fail to receive what he has to offer. Why do you suppose this was for them then and is equally true for so many today?

First and foremost I believe it is because the message has not been made clear. Not everyone heard the same information about him. Given the many who claimed to be the Messiah in those days, and the fact that Jesus lived in a remote area, in Galilee, and that he was crucified, it does not surprise us that most people made a judgment against him. Some saw nothing in him that they wanted to follow, and others turned against him because they loved darkness rather than light. They turned against him out of self-protection, fear, greed, lust or conformity to tradition. They did not receive him because they did not understand exactly who he was and had not grasped the meaning of the message that he brought.

The same disillusion and misrepresentation of Jesus is true for so many us today. There are so many today who portray Jesus as a reflection of a judgmental God; one who sits eagerly ready to bring down hell fire and brimstone at the simplest notion of sin; who portray Christianity as a legalistic series of rules, rights and regulations created for the sole purpose of condemning others; for creating a hierarchy of existence amongst the children of God when in

fact there has never been any intention or command by God to establish one. It is implausible to think that our society has come to know God as a Creator who brings people into this world for the sole purpose of judging them rather than seeing God as a Creator who is not seeking an excuse to condemn, but rather seeks relationship and reconciliation with mankind. So, nearly sixty years after Jesus' death on the cross, John looks at and writes about Jesus from the perspective of a world that hold Jesus in their memory – much in the same way that we today view Christ – and John assesses what the coming of Jesus into the world really meant. That is, John challenges us to answer the question, “When we look at Christ, what should we see?”

To answer this question, let's first begin with the notion of the whole of *Creation* being a reflection of God. To look at *Creation* is to see the Father; to see God. I may look at a table lamp and recognize it as a *tiffany* or an architectural design and recognize it as a *Frank Lloyd Wright* or I may hear a poem and instantly know that it was written by *Maya Angelou* – “A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song”. There is an essence of ownership, style and a sense of reflection in all created works of man and so it is the same with *Creation* itself. Just as each secular creation, whether it is a building, a piece of artwork, in the words of your favorite poet or in the taste and smell of your grandmother's Sour Cream Pound Cake, there is a mark of ownership that manifest itself within each work and so equally worth noticing, there is within *Creation* itself a similar manifestation that identifies our Creator has made His mark on all the whole of *Creation*.

The Gospel of John begins by describing the nature and relationship of Christ. Christ is more than just another reflection of God as seen in *Creation*; rather he is the very portion of God which has spoken *Creation* into existence. In summation, we are told that, *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God*. *Word* here is not ‘word’ used in the grammatical sense, but

rather it is used as a more semantic extension of ‘word’ which reaches beyond our notions to such constructs as thought, speech, account, meaning, reasoning or logic. The Greek word for this is *logos* from which the English word *logic* is derived, in fact the suffix *-ology* meaning *the science or study of* is derived from the same Greek word. The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria adopted the term *logos* into Jewish philosophy as an attempt to bring awareness to the logical structure of *Creation*; a *Creation* well thought out, designed and established by a logical, reasoning God. Here in our Scripture reading today, we find John identifying Jesus as the incarnation of the *logos*, the very logic and reasoning through which all things are made.

When John writes, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . .” he speaks to more than just the existence of Christ, rather he defines Christ as the physical manifestation of the very same nature and power of God which authored all of *Creation*. The reasoning power of God, that portion of the Creator which spoke the Universe and all that is within it and all that extends beyond it was packaged into a living, breathing, flesh and blood child; born of the Virgin Mary and delivered into our physical world not for the sole purpose of bringing to us more *head knowledge*, but for the purpose of doing for us, providing for us and equipping us with *heart knowledge*; knowledge obtained through action and deed; knowledge that speaks to the very nature and mind of God. Simply stated, “Jesus *is* the incarnate mind of God.” The Reverend John Shearman of the United Church of Canada summarized this best when he wrote, “When we translate John’s words concerning *the Word of God becoming flesh*, we might just as well translate John’s words as, *the Mind of God became a man.*”

Still, I am troubled by the unbelief of so many today, particularly those belonging to one of two groups that are dear to my heart. The first group is comprised of young people who have been engrained and conditioned by society to think and believe as they are told rather than

seeking knowledge for themselves and in our case today I am speaking specifically to the *heart knowledge* of Christ apart from the *head knowledge* of the world. Notice that I am not speaking against *head knowledge*. As an educator, I could never speak against or enough about the importance of a good education. What I am speaking to is rather the importance of complementing and quite possibly testing what we are taught by the world – even theological teachings – against what we hold in our hearts and that is the realization that God, in all His infinite mercy and grace sent his one and only Son as the very physical manifestation of his mind, to die a criminals death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

The second group I am particularly concerned with is the *margins of society*. As we have defined before, the *margins of society* are made up of those social groups that encompass the poor, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Blacks; members of other disenfranchised groups, women and gays. Unlike young people who are taught to believe as they are told rather than to discover truth on their own, the margins of society are told that they are not worthy of discovering the truth of God's love and are undeserving of all that God has to offer. On the one hand we have a group that is told that they are deserving of God's love accompanied by their interpretation of what that love looks like and on the hand we have a group who is being told that they are unable to obtain what God offers unless that are willing to conform to their afore mentioned interpretation. But John tells us in his Gospel this morning that all are worthy of God's love and it is not by human will or understanding. John writes “. . . to all who received him [him begin Jesus Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We

have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The simplicity of John’s message speaks deeply to our souls and to souls that have been saturated with unbelieving messages. Jesus, the Son of God, lived among us for a while. The word has then been for us, as Pastor Dwight Nelson writes, "*tabernacled*." His choice of words comes from the Old Testament, when the people were in the wilderness and they would set up a tent or *tabernacle* where God's presence dwelled with them. It was within these tabernacles they came to experience the glory of God. So it is this same glory of God we see in Jesus and in turn experience as he lives within us. As written by John, the glory of Jesus, the presence of God in Jesus, is full of grace and truth. So when we receive Jesus, we receive grace and truth; truth that sets us free and a grace that leads us to salvation.

Since we last gathered together, the world has been transformed, changed if you will by the transition of one calendar year to the next. We have left 2009 behind us and together we have welcomed in 2010; a year that I am sure will afford us many blessings and opportunities to seek God’s Will and Way for our lives. In recalling the words of verse 12, we are reminded that for those who have come before us and have believed in Jesus it has meant a new life of spiritual power for them as the children of God. So, too, may it be for us as together we begin a new year of living in God’s grace. Amen!