

## And the Word Became Flesh

### **John 1:1-2; 14-18**

John opens his gospel with this amazing, cosmic, description of God that is reminiscent of the opening line of Genesis, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. Before anything was created, when there was no earth, no sun, no universe, no mankind, no angels, no devils, God was, everlasting, infinite, without beginning and without end. It's beyond our ability to understand, but if we take the time to reflect on it, we can see a glimpse of the glory and eternalness of God. And there in the beginning, before anything was created, was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. John is talking about Jesus and saying Jesus was there in Gen. 1 before anything was created and in fact, all things that were made were made through him and nothing that was made was created without him. When God said, "Let there be light" Jesus was the Agent through whom that first light was created.

The reason John calls Jesus the Word is to emphasize that God is a communicating God, God is a God who speaks, and Jesus came as the ultimate communication of God to this dark, sin-soaked, deaf-to-God's-voice world. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*

That's what we celebrate each Christmas – that the Word, God the Son, became flesh. Jesus came to earth as the very voice of God to us. He came not only to speak God's word, but to be the very embodiment of God's word to us. Jesus told Philip, "when you have seen me you have seen the Father." When you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father. When you have heard Jesus, you have heard the Father. There is no daylight between the Father and the Son. They are One and their voices speak the same word to us. Jesus came to communicate God's heart to us. John said, no one has seen the Father, but Jesus came to make Him known to us. This Christmas Eve, let's consider what God speaks to us through His Son Jesus.

#### **1. Jesus speaks God's love for us**

When we ponder the babe in the manger, if we don't see in that babe the love of God being warmly and tenderly expressed for humanity than we are missing the message of Christmas. If God had simply wanted to take the world by force, if He had wanted to conquer His enemies and rule the earth again, Jesus, the Word, would have come as the King of kings and Lord of lords, far more powerful than any and all powers on earth. He would have split the sky with an army of angels, destroyed his enemies with the power of his word, and set up his throne. And nothing, and no one, could have stopped him. If God had wanted to communicate "I am ruler over all!" Jesus would have descended as a warrior in all his divine majesty.

But to come as a baby? For the infinite, eternal God to wrap himself up in the flesh of a tiny, helpless baby, teaches us that the word God was speaking wasn't primarily rulership. That message is in there – after all, the Magi came to worship the baby who was born the king of Israel - but in that moment, in that stable, God was speaking tenderly to the world a message of love. Jesus laid aside his robes of royalty and power and put on weakness. You don't get more weak and more helpless than a baby. But what a message of tender love was being displayed in that little stable. The Bible says that Mary pondered all these things in her heart, all the mystery and glory that was being spoken over her baby, but as she

pondered these things, she and Joseph also held and loved on this little baby and the loudest message they heard was love. Jesus came as a baby to speak God's tender love for this world.

Let me ask you a personal question: Have you ever looked at the night sky and felt really small and insignificant? Have you ever, in a quiet moment, wondered what difference your life makes or even if your life really matters in the grand scheme of things? Have you ever struggled with a sense of emptiness inside that seemed to whisper to you that your life doesn't really matter and you don't matter? I think we all have those moments at points in our lives, but those inner questions are attached to a bigger question: what makes a life count? What makes a life valuable? And attached to that is another question: What is my soul looking for? What is my soul longing for?

### **And the soul felt its worth**

One of the great Christmas carols we sing every year is O Holy Night. The first line goes:

*O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining  
Till he appear'd and the soul felt its worth.*

The soul felt its worth. What is your soul worth? To God, it's worth dying for. The Creator of all the universe said you were worth dying for. That's not the same thing as saying that we are worthy of Jesus dying for us. Worthy of Jesus dying for us would mean we deserve it. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve and there's no higher example of grace than the cross. We didn't deserve Jesus giving his life for us, but he values us so highly, we are worth so much to him, that he became flesh in order to live and die for our souls to be reclaimed back to God. When you look up into the night sky and wonder if your life matters, it's comforting to think of the family and friends who love and care about you. But if you want to measure your soul's worth, think of the Savior who appeared in the manger and know that your life is precious to God because He loves you. We matter because we matter to God because He loves us – and whether we know it or not, that is ultimately what our souls are looking and longing for. To know that we are loved by God. That message of love is what Jesus spoke when he became flesh.

### **2. Jesus speaks God's sympathy for us**

One of the reasons Jesus put on flesh and became a baby and lived among us the way we live was so that he could sympathize with our condition. Jesus didn't become *like* a man, he became a man. He would feel our weakness. He would endure the temptations we endure. He would enjoy the things that we enjoy, and he would suffer the things we suffer. He would walk in our shoes, literally.

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Heb. 4:15*

The religious leaders in Jesus' day felt that they were above the ordinary person. They didn't feel sympathy for them, they felt contempt for them. They especially looked down on the poor and the sinner caught in their sin.

Jesus immersed himself fully in what it means to be a man in a fallen world. He felt all that we feel, so he would be able to sympathize with us. Jesus never sinned, but he knows what it is to be tempted to sin. He knows what it is to be rejected by others. He knows what it is to be betrayed by a friend. He knows what it is to be laughed at. He knows what it is to be on the pinnacle of popularity one day, only to have those same crowds turn against him the next day. *He came to his own but his own did not receive him.* (vs. 11)

He knows what it is to be afraid to die. He knows what it is to wrestle with God's will. He knows what it is to suffer pain. Why is this so important to us? Because it tells us that Jesus is not far removed from us and unable to sympathize with us. Jesus can relate to what we're going through because He's been there.

There are some valleys that are so deep that the person who has never walked through them simply can't understand what the pain and sorrow is like. There are depths of sorrow and pain that make it wrong to say "I understand what you're going through" if you've never experienced it. We can't understand some things *unless* we've actually walked through it ourselves. That doesn't mean we can't seek to come alongside someone and comfort them, but we should be careful to avoid saying, "I understand what you're going through." But Jesus does understand. He knows what we're going through and can relate to us in the deepest possible way. Jesus didn't experience every possible heartache or temptation, but he walked deeper valleys than anyone else in history, he suffered more deeply than anyone else in history, and endured temptations far stronger than anything any of us have endured. And all of that tuned his heart to ours so that he can relate to us no matter what we're going through.

There is no greater comfort when we face hard times, when our hearts are wrestling with fears that seem so much stronger than we are, when we walk through valleys so dark that we doubt we'll ever see the light again, what a comfort to know we aren't alone. We have a high priest who walks with us and relates to us. We can go to Jesus and know he understands. He sympathizes.

Jesus entered this broken world so that he could understand and feel everything first hand so that he could relate to us in our pain and temptation and help us through. Jesus speaks God's sympathy for us.

### **3. Jesus speaks God's salvation over us**

Of course the greatest message we hear from God when we look at that little baby in the manger is the message that God Himself is our salvation. God became a man in order to be the Savior of the world. The angel said to Joseph in Matt. 1:21

***21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will **save His people from their sins.**"***

John writes these familiar but powerful words in chapter 3 verse 16 and 17:

***<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to **save the world through him.** John 3:16-17***

And the way He did that is found in John 1 beginning in verse 12:

*<sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive 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. John 1:12-13*

The word salvation comes from the Greek word *sozo* and it means rescue or deliverance. Jesus came to rescue us from all the effects and consequences of sin. We don't want to reduce salvation to something that happens after we die: we go to heaven rather than hell because we are saved. Yes, that is the greatest, most liberating aspect of salvation, but the word salvation intersects with every aspect of our lives right here and now.

When Jesus healed the woman with the bleeding infirmity, it says she was saved – *sozo* – by the power of the Lord. Salvation came to her in the form of healing. When the sinful woman anointed Jesus' feet with oil and the people reclining with Jesus began to condemn her for her sinful past, Jesus said to her, "go in peace, your faith has *saved you*." Salvation came to her in the form of forgiveness and acceptance by God. When Peter began to walk on the water and then took his eyes off of Jesus and put them on the wind and the waves he began to sink and he cried out "Lord, save me!" Salvation - *sozo* - came to him in the form of saving him from drowning.

Then, of course, in John 3:16-17 salvation means to be saved from God's judgment. What this means is that the salvation Jesus came to bring us is involved in every aspect of our lives. Salvation isn't something that just happens after we die. It's going on here and now, and then when we leave this earth and stand before a holy God before Whose holy judgment we wouldn't stand a chance, we are saved, rescued, delivered from the wrath of that judgment by Jesus' saving power.

What this means is that we are to relate to Jesus as our Savior every moment of every day. This connects back to the second point, that Jesus sympathizes with us, he relates to our everyday struggles, sins and problems. That's why Hebrews 4, after proclaiming that Jesus is a high priest who sympathizes with us in every way, goes on to encourage us:

*<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

In our time of need. Every time of need. When our car breaks down, we cry out to the Lord. When we are at the end of our rope, we cry out to the Lord. When we feel crushed by our debt and the never-ending bills coming in and we feel like Peter, about to drown, we cry out to the Lord. When we find out there's a spot on our lung, or an elevated white blood cell count, we cry out to the Lord. When we lose our job, or are concerned about the salvation of a loved one, we cry out to the Lord. And when we find ourselves finally (or unexpectedly) on death's doorstep – as one day we all surely will – we cry out to the Lord our Savior, with full trust and faith that he is able to deliver us from all trouble and danger. Our faith isn't in ourselves, and it isn't in our faith, our faith is in Jesus who was born the Savior of the world.

He will never fail us. He will never abandon us. He will never reject us. Jesus is the *Logo* – the living Word of God – and he speaks God's love, God's sympathy, and God's salvation to0000006

Christmas Message  
Allen Snapp  
Grace Community Church  
Dec. 24, 2017

us. This Christmas Eve, let's bend our ears and our hearts to hear him and take him at his word. Let's pray.