

### The Word Became Flesh

- I. What those words mean
- II. How that fact affects our lives

*(John 1:1-14) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was with God in the beginning. {3} Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. {4} In him was life, and that life was the light of men. {5} The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. {6} There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. {7} He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. {8} He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. {9} The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. {10} He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. {11} He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. {12} Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- {13} children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. {14} 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.*

Here's a Christmas Day quiz for you: Of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, how many contain an account of Jesus's birth? Do you know? Let's go through them. The first one is easy. The most complete account of Jesus' birth is recorded in what book? Yes, the gospel of Luke, Chapter 2. Many of you heard of those words read last night, or recited by the children last week. You maybe know them by heart. *In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world....* The next most complete account of Jesus' birth is recorded in Matthew's gospel. Matthew actually focuses more on the role that Joseph played in the savior's birth—from the tracing of Joseph's line back to Abraham through the angel's command to take Mary home as his wife, through the visit of the Magi and the flight into Egypt. But when it comes to the actual birth of Jesus, Matthew devotes only one verse to that event. Matthew simply says, *But Joseph had no union with Mary until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.* And what about Mark's gospel? Does Mark record Jesus' birth? No actually, he doesn't. Mark's gospel begins with Jesus as a grown man, being baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.

Which brings us to the fourth gospel, the Gospel of John. Does John's gospel give us an inspired account of the savior's birth? Yes he does. But again, it's not very long. John records the birth of Jesus with four simple words, words that will serve as our theme tonight. John simply said,

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In other words, John doesn't add all the historical details about the manger and the shepherds and the angels. Rather, he steps back and takes a more theological view of the Savior's birth. So that's what we're going to do as well. As we focus on those four words, we're going to consider:

- I. What those words mean

## II. How that fact affects our lives

First, what do those words mean, “the word became flesh”? You maybe know that John’s gospel was written after all the other gospels were written. That means that John had the freedom to kind of cover some new ground and offer a little deeper analysis of the events which the other writers had already documented. It kind of reminds me of what happens after every Packers game. First you have the beat writers basically recording, “this is what happened in the game (the highlights and the lowlights). And then a little later come the analysis of what happened. On the Packers website, one of my favorite pages is something called, “What You Might Have Missed.” It offers some replays of particular plays, from a wide angle lens. It allows you to see some things you maybe didn’t see the first time around. Things you might have missed.

In my mind, that’s what John does in his gospel. He assumes that you’ve read Luke’s account of Jesus birth. And so, he steps back to show you the big picture, so you can see what you might have missed. John’s account of Jesus’ birth starts way back at the beginning of time. You might say that John starts with the camera angle set really wide. John begins his gospel with these words, *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.* The obvious question there is, “What exactly is the Word?” You notice that the word is capitalized. That’s because John is using it not at to refer to something. Rather, he’s using it to refer to Someone. That becomes all the more clear when at the end of this section, John goes on to say, *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.*

That term, “the One and Only,” sometimes translated as the Only Begotten, is a reference to who? Clearly, that’s a reference to God’s Son, the second person of the Trinity. That term, the Word, is a reference to Jesus. So what is John saying? He’s saying that in the beginning, that is, before time began, before the world was created, the Son of God was already there. He was with God. In fact, he was God. With those words, John is laying the foundation for the fact that true God was about to become true Man, in the person of Jesus Christ.

Which brings us to the second half of John’s powerful statement that: *The Word became Flesh.* Again, what does that mean? In the original language the word translated as “flesh” refers to the human nature, or the human body, or flesh and blood. Often times it has a negative connotation. In most places in Scripture, it refers to our sinful nature. That’s because in most cases human beings are by nature, sinful. But that’s not always the case. Adam and Eve at the time of their creation, were fully human, yet weren’t sinners. You and I, when we are in heaven, will be fully human, but we will be without sin. That’s what Jesus was at the time of his conception. Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, at the moment of his conception in the Virgin Mary, took on a second nature, a human nature. From that time on he was 100% God and 100% man in one person.

Now, can you comprehend that? Can you comprehend that the helpless little baby that Mary held in her arms was in fact the Creator of the universe? Can you fathom that the God who is eternal was suddenly one minute, one hour, one day old? I can’t. It makes no sense. I can’t understand how Jesus can be God and man at the same time. Yet what I can’t fathom, what Mary could only ponder in her heart, is in fact the truth.

In fact, it’s what Christmas is all about. You might say that it is the original Christmas miracle. God became man and yet remained fully God. That’s what Saint John means when he says, *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.* Literally, he pitched his tent; he set up his tabernacle in our midst.

So now that we kind of analyzed what is meant by those words, “the Word became

flesh”, maybe the more important question is, so what? So what does it mean for our lives and our world. Or to put it another way, since the word became flesh, let’s consider

## II. How that fact affects our lives

Well, here in our text, St John first documents the effect that Jesus’ birth had on the people of his day. John writes, *He (namely, Jesus) 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. (John 1:10-11)* Really, you can understand those words in a couple of ways. In the narrow sense, even though Jesus was born as a Jew, even though he was promised the Jews, it was ultimately the Jews who for the most part rejected Jesus as their Messiah. That’s because the Jews were looking for an earthly king, someone who could keep their stomachs full and the Romans off their backs. When Jesus didn’t do that, but instead called them to repent of their sins, and then suffered a humiliating death on a cross, the people turned their backs on him.

But that was true not only of the Jewish nation. It’s true of mankind in general. Notice that John says that, *though the world was made through him, the world (that is the people in the world) did not recognize him.* That too, is the sad truth, isn’t it? You think about how many people in our world don’t celebrate Christmas. They; maybe know something about a baby and some wise men, but they fail to acknowledge who that baby is and more importantly what that baby has done for their eternal lives. They kind of side step a manger (and the cross!) and go straight to the eggnog and the presents and the wishful hope for some kind of political “peace on earth”.

In fact, you realize that you and I are not immune from those kinds of misplaced priorities. It’s easy for us to get caught up in all the non-essentials of Christmas. It’s easy to get so caught up in the gifts (plural) that we miss the Gift. The one wrapped not in pretty paper, but rather wrapped in strips of cloth. The one not under the tree, but rather the one in the manger. That’s the greatest gift ever given. The question is, what will we do with that gift? John tells us that there are a lot of people who refused that gift. But he also describes another group of people. John writes here in our text,

*to those who received him, to those who believed in his name....* Now, don’t misunderstand those words, “to those who receive Jesus.” John is not talking about making those who made their decision for Christ. Faith is not a decision that humans make. In fact, John is going to come right out and say that none of this was by human decision. No, faith itself is a gift from God. Faith is the God-given ability to lay hold of the promises God makes. It’s the hand that receives the free gift of a Savior from sin. And to those who receive him, to those who believe in his name, what does God give? John tells us. *He gives 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.*

Do you realize what those words mean for you? Two things. First it means that if you believe in that baby born in a stable is your savior from sin, it’s not because you chose God. Rather, God chose you. And secondly, it means that now that God has worked faith in your heart through his Word and Sacrament, now God has made you his child. He’s given you all the right to become the children of God. Imagine, by grace, through faith in Jesus, you are all adopted into God’s family. I know that Christmas is the day to celebrate Jesus’ birthday. But it’s also the day to celebrate your birthday. Your spiritual birthday. Because Jesus was born into this world, God can now adopt you into his family. That means that you now have the right to come to your Father in prayer and know that he hears you as a dear father listens to his dear children.

Not only that, but because God’s Son took on flesh and blood, because Jesus became your brother, he knows what you are going through. He knows the temptations you face,

because he's felt them too. And most importantly, because Jesus took on flesh and blood, he could offer his holy body on a cross and pay the price for your sins. In fact, it's that same body and blood that Jesus offers you to eat and drink today, given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.

My friends, that's what it means that the Word became flesh. God became a man and yet still was God, so that by his holy life and his innocent death, he could make you his precious, beloved child of God, now and forever, and ever. Amen.