

## The Purpose for His Coming

Preached: 12/20/2020; 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent – Germantown;

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### **Advent:**

The season of Advent challenges us to remember a baby that was born to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. This is not an ordinary story of a mother giving birth to a baby. This Baby was special. In the season of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we take some time to remember the promises that God made to His people. Promises to come. Promises to send a Deliverer. Promises to once again rescue His people from an evil task master. This time the slave master is sin. Our God has a plan that is unfolding before our eyes. It is a plan to demonstrate His love for all the world.

### **The Advent Wreath**

As the season moves forward toward Christmas, the light on our Wreath grows brighter. We have lit three of the candles on the circle of the wreath. The candles are symbols of important themes that we think about at Christmas – Hope, Peace, Joy. But there is one more important theme that is manifested in the drama of Christmas.

Today we light the third candle on our Advent wreath – the **candle of LOVE**. Love is evident all through the Christmas stories that we read in Matthew and Luke's gospels. Mary's love for her baby. Elizabeth's love for Mary. Joseph's love for Mary. And in all of them we see their love for God. But most of all we see God's love for them and for the whole world. Understanding God's love for us, in spite of our sinfulness, in spite of our brokenness, is one of the most transformative powers that exists. God Loves YOU.

**Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6**

### **Prayer**

Thank you for the way the Christmas story reminds us of your love for us. The verse that we have learned since our childhood tells us **"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son."** You gave us Jesus because You loved us – without condition, without limit. Fill our hearts with an awareness of that love so that we will never doubt that we are a special people, who are loved. And so fill us with your love, that we will demonstrate that love to all we meet today. Amen.

### **Scripture**

**John 1:1-18**

### **Message**

**How He Fulfills His Purpose**

Many people understand that Christmas is the Birthday of Jesus. There are even Christmas Carols that refer to that. But just to be contrary, may I suggest another word to replace the word "Birthday". Birthday implies the beginning of a person's existence. But as we have been looking at the Prologue to John's gospel, verses 1 – 18 we learn that Jesus' existence does not begin in Bethlehem. John refers to Jesus as The Word. And John has informed us of somethings that are true about Jesus: **1 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.** Jesus did not begin to exist when he arrives in Bethlehem. According to John, He already existed before that. What happened in Bethlehem was an event that we refer to as the **Incarnation**. "Carnal" is the word for flesh. In Verse 14, John says: **14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.** So, rather than observing Jesus' birthday at Christmas, we are actually observing His Incarnation. We are observing that now, Jesus is becoming flesh. He is becoming human. Before Bethlehem, Jesus existed in another form. Now he will become a human being. It is a significant and important point in our belief system.

Putting together what we have learned here in this first chapter, here is the picture. The Word was involved in the creation of the world, and the creation of the human race. He saw the beauty of the world when it was first

created. He experienced the beauty of humanity before evil and sin invade the human race. He has observed the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. He has heard their promises to be God's people, to obey everything that God said. He has watched as they have failed and disobeyed God. He has watched as evil has run rampant over all the earth. And now, He wants to come into the world and become a part of the world that is so broken. What would prompt Jesus to make that decision? He must have love the world and the people in the world. He must have hope for the world.

John tells us several reasons why Jesus would now want to take on human form. **He Made His dwelling among us.** He lived in this world and **became one of us.** As Jesus becomes human, He demonstrates the dignity of the human race. Humanity is created in the image of God. Humanity is the highlight of God's creation. And now Jesus becomes Human.

It is important to note that the New Testament writers assure us that Jesus did not cease to be God when He became human. Philippians 2:6-7 ***Who, being in very nature<sup>[a]</sup> God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature<sup>[b]</sup> of a servant, being made in human likeness.*** Jesus has a divine nature, but now He has a human nature. SO, Jesus is someone who knows what it is like to be human. He knows physical pain, emotional pain. He knows hunger and thirst. He knows everything that you go through. When you pray, you are praying to a God who knows what you are experiencing. So the Incarnation is important because Jesus became one of us.

**God with a face:** A second reason why the incarnation is such a big deal is that we now get to see with our own eyes what God is like. **Verse 18.** In Jesus we see the glory of God. Jesus shows us the character of God. He shows us the compassion and mercy of God. Jesus shows us the power of God over danger. He shows us a picture of God's grace – His faithful love – and in Jesus we see truth and we hear the truth revealed to us.

Thirdly, there is another reason why the Incarnation is important. Last weekend we talked about the mission of the Word in 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 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.*** Jesus as the Word came into the world to give people the opportunity to become children of God.. Because of our sinfulness, we are alienated from God. We are out of relationship with Him. In order for people to come into a right relationship with God, something must be done about the problem of sin. To be in a right relationship with God means that our sins are forgiven. They are removed from our record. In Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus, we read about a conversation that an angel of God had with a man named Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter. He was engaged to a young woman, a virgin by the name of Mary. Before their wedding was finalized, Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant. And he was not the father of the baby. Joseph decided to break the engagement. But then he has a dream and an angel of God informs Joseph that Mary has not been unfaithful to him. The child she was carrying was the result of the activity of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. Joseph should proceed with his plan to take Mary as his wife, and when the child is born Joseph is to give him the name Jesus. Joseph is told that the child will be named Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. The name Jesus means, He Saves. So Joseph learns that the Word was becoming flesh, was becoming a human so that he could save people from their sins. The prophet Isaiah writes about this "saving" work of God's servant.

#### **Isaiah 53:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.**

**<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,**

***and by his wounds we are healed.***

***<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.***

So Jesus' work of giving people the opportunity to become children of God necessitates Him becoming Flesh, becoming a human. That's how He will save people from their sins.

On this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the season of Advent, when we have focused on the theme of Love, we see God's love in action for you and for me.

Christmas observances may include many differing things – lights, trees, cookies, presents. But there is one thing that surpasses all of that. We observe this event because it is a clear affirmation of God's love for you.

A few years ago, when I was going through a study of Rick Warren's book [The Purpose Driven Life](#), Rick Warren makes this statement about God's love. It is transformational:

***God will never love you any less than He does right now;  
God will never love you any more than He does right now.***

No where do we see God's love for us more clearly than in the Incarnation of Jesus – He became one of us, to save us from our sins. I hope that in the Christmas season this year, that you will comprehend the reality of those two statements. The birth of Jesus is proof of God's unconditional love for you.