

The Word Became Flesh

Preached: 11/29/2020; 1st Sunday in Advent – Germantown;

Advent:

We begin this weekend the season of Advent. Advent is a season of preparation. Advent begins 4 Sundays before Christmas Day. There are many things that we typically think about as we prepare for Christmas – buying gifts, decorating our homes, cooking and baking. But the season of Advent is not only a season for preparing for Christmas, when we celebrate the first coming of Jesus. The emphasis of Advent is preparation for the 2nd Coming of Christ at the end of the age. As such Advent is a season for Penitence – repentance from sin. We are reminded that Jesus' coming into the world was for the purpose of saving people from their sins. And that work of saving people from their sins involved the sacrifice and death of Jesus on the cross. It was our sin that led to His leaving heaven for us. So as we are reminded of our sin, we turn from sin, we repent, and seek forgiveness. As we anticipate His coming again, we want to be ready for Him.

The Advent Wreath

One of the traditions of the season of Advent that we observe here at Germantown Church is the use of the Advent Wreath. It is a special and meaningful tradition, and I wanted to include the use of the Advent Wreath in our Recorded sessions. The Advent wreath is made up of 4 candles in a circle around a candle in the center of the wreath. Each Sunday in Advent we light one more candle, as we move closer to Christmas. The candles in the circle each represent one of the themes of the season – **HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE**. The candle in the center represents Jesus. We light the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve. In this year 2020, with all of its challenges, we can the world needs to **hear words of Hope, words of Peace, words of Joy, and words of Love.** And we certainly need to be reminded that God has not abandoned this world, but has come to the world in the person of Jesus.

So today we will light the first candle on our Advent wreath – the **candle of hope**. The coming of Jesus fulfilled the Hopes of God's people for a Savior, for a deliverer from sin and evil. God had not given up on His people. He longed to rescue them and save them from evil. Listen to these words from Isaiah.

Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7

Prayer

Dear God, as we begin this season of Advent, we need to be reminded that with You there is Hope. Some mornings we don't want to get out of bed. We don't want to turn on the radio or tv. We don't want to hear any bad news. We don't want to see people lined up for miles to get food from food banks. We don't want to hear about the number of COVID cases. We don't want to hear about corrupt governments, or about wars, or natural disasters. But Lord we know that **you will have the Last Word**. You will deliver, and redeem and restore. We look forward with hope and anticipation of that day. Help us not to be so distracted by all of the bad and challenging things that are going on in our world today, that we lose sight of You seated in Majesty on Your throne, ruling the world. Amen.

Scripture

John 1:1-18

Message

The Word Became Flesh

The 4th gospel – the gospel of John begins differently from Matthew and Luke. There is no stable, or Wisemen from the east, or shepherds or angelic announcements, or even Mary and Joseph. John is more interested in telling his readers who Jesus was and why He came. The first 18 verses of John's gospel are referred to as the Prologue. It is an introduction that will establish the themes that he will return to throughout the book. I believe it is just as appropriate for us to look at John's writing in this season of Advent and Christmas.

I believe that in order to understand this Prologue, it will be helpful to us to understand John's purpose in writing. In 20:30-31 we read:

³⁰ *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.* ³¹ *But these are written that you may believe²⁰ that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John's purpose, his stated desire in writing this book is to convince people that Jesus is the Messiah. Messiah refers to a promised Savior that God planned to send into the world. He wants to convince people that Jesus was the Son of God, so that they will **believe in Him**, and so that they will **receive the gift of life**. To believe in Jesus according to John is not just to know about Him, and believe that He lived, but to abandon everything else, to embrace the life and teachings of Jesus and live for Him alone. A very clear purpose. John himself became a follower of Jesus and experienced new life – not just existing, breathing, heart beating – but living in a renewed relationship with God, with a sense of purpose and with direction.

The first 5 verses of chapter 1, answer the reader who may be wondering, ***Who is this Jesus and why should I believe in Him?*** (Read verses 1-5) John refers to a personality that he calls the Word. Who is he referring to when he uses the term Word? As the prologue continues, we understand that when John speaks of the Word, he is referring to Jesus. In verse 14, he says that the Word became Flesh – became a human being. And in verse 17, he refers to Jesus. So when John speaks of the Word, he is talking about Jesus. Now, why does John refer to Jesus as the Word? Why doesn't he just say Jesus. When John wrote this book, we believe that he was in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was a Gentile/Greek city, with a large population of Jews. So John's audience is multi-cultural. The word that is translated Word is the Greek word **LOGOS**. It was a philosophical term that was the subject of discussion. In the Greek world, the word Logos (Word) referred to the rational mind that ruled the universe. For His Jewish readers, the term LOGOS had another meaning. It referred to an expression – what we would understand as a Word, that comes from the mouth of a speaker. But for the Jew, **LOGOS** meant much more than just an utterance from a speaker. The Jews believed that God was a God who had spoken. God's word had power, creative power. The opening words of John's gospel are very similar to the opening words of the book of Genesis.

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

The Word of God, brought the creation into existence. The Word of God brought light into existence. God's word brings order out of chaos, brings life where there was no life. Referring to Jesus as the Word, is important and significant. Jesus is not just some ordinary being. He is not just some ordinary prophet or preacher with new fangled ideas. He is the WORD Himself!. It is John's desire that his readers must embrace Him and follow Him. As John continues through this Prologue, he tells us some important things about the WORD:

- **He was "in the beginning"**. Before anything existed, before the world existed, He existed. When we celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem we are not just celebrating a new baby, who had been conceived in the womb of a young Jewish girl, 9 months before this. We are not observing the birth of a baby that God chose to "inhabit" as a Son. We are observing the Coming into Human form, One who has existed from eternity.
- **He was with God**. We are introduced to the concept that God exists as multiple persons. As Christians we believe that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Word exists with the Father, Creator, God. He was Face to Face with God.
- **He was God**. Not only was the Word WITH God, He shares the character, the nature of God. He is a peer with the Father God. Throughout his gospel, John will give evidence of the divine nature of God. Again, remember John's purpose.
- **He was involved in Creation**. All things were made through Him. As Creator, He is in position that all people should be accountable to Him. He brought us into existence, and our lives should be lived in submission to Him as our Maker.
- **In Him was life**. He is the source of life. The Genesis account of creation says that God brought life to a world that was formless and void. When God formed a human body He breathed into it and the man became a living being. He is the one who gives life. Not just physical life – breathing and a heartbeat – but spiritual life.

- **He is the light of God shining in the darkness.** He brings light where the darkness of ignorance exists – He is the one who reveals God to the world. He brings light into a world of uncertainty. He brings light into a world that is often tainted with evil and sin.

What do you believe about Jesus? Who do you think He is? As we begin our Advent journey this year John reminds us of some important realities.

- Jesus is no ordinary human being. It was John's passion and ours that we know who Jesus was and why He was so significant.
- Jesus is evidence that the God who created the world has not abandoned the world, in spite of the choices people make
- The WORD who was "Face to Face" with God the Father was willing to leave, in order to come into the darkness
- He has come into the world for the purpose of bringing Light and Life to this world.

May you be encouraged to know in this season of Advent and Christmas that **you are the object of God's love**. Take the time during these days to reflect on the nature of Jesus. Take time to rest in His presence and love. Reflect on this challenge: **As I am loved, so I will love.**