

The Word Became Flesh

December 30, 2018

John 1:14-18

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The birth of Jesus is found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Matthew has the Magi visiting Jesus as a child. Luke has the shepherds visiting the baby Jesus at the manger. What the gospel of John does is introduce Christ, not from the perspective of the physical birth but from the very beginning. **John 1:1-2** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (NRSV). John introduces Jesus from a celestial perspective and asserts his divine status as the Son of God.

The theme of today's Scripture reading is "The Word Became Flesh." Jesus is the word of God brought to life. It is not that he just came to deliver the word but he came to live with us. This is very important! By living with us, the people get the divine experience. People get to see what God is like. As John phrases it "we have seen his glory." The personal encounter is a very important thing. The best class I have taken in my counseling curriculum included a lesson on serving the needs of the community. I had three options; one option was to spend a full day blindfolded, another option was to spend a full day in a wheelchair, and the other option was to spend the night in a shelter. Then we had to write a paper about the experience. For years that stood as the best class I have ever taken due to the valuable experience that I received. I took the easy route; I spent the night in a shelter. It allowed me to experience the need of one aspect of the community that we serve. However, there was a huge difference between me and everyone else that was there. I only had to spend one night in the shelter and I knew that my stay was short term and temporary. Everyone else did not have such hope. To be able to serve the need to your fullest abilities, you have to experience the need to the best of your abilities. In order to help those on the fringes of society it helps to know what it is like to be on the fringes of society.

Let's take a look at Jesus. But first I think we need to understand the path that we take. We live in homes that are completely furnished. We have controlled comfort - heating and air conditioning at our fingertips without effort or labor. We have abundant entertainment that comes through the television, computer, or smart phone. We have cars that not only get us from one place to another they also transport us in controlled comfort and entertainment. We live our lives surrounded around abundant comfort and entertainment. I'm not saying that these things are bad. These things developed during my life time. But they run simultaneously with a decline in worshiping the creator. I see that as the problem is as Jesus said in the parable of the sower. The seed that fell in the thorns is unfruitful because the deceitfulness of wealth chokes it out.

The path that I took by spending the night in a shelter was a mandatory class assignment. I did it because it is required. From time to time I encourage others to do the same. If you feed the hungry, it helps to know what it is like to be in the line of the soup kitchen. If you provide shelter, it helps to know what it is like to be homeless. I preach it and I teach it but I confess that as of this day I failed to do the other assignments. I spent the night in the shelter but I have not spent a day blindfolded and I have not spent a full day in a wheel chair.

The path Jesus took is very significant. Jesus did not have a home that was furnished. Jesus did not even have a home. This is because Jesus reached out to those on the fringes of society by being one with those on the fringes of society. Jesus connected with the rejected. Jesus did not have a car. There was no convenience of transportation. He could have obtained a horse but he did not. He chose to walk and he chose no luxuries. From his birth and the famous manger story to his death and the famous passion story there were no luxuries.

Jesus had a divine mission to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, to heal others. What did Jesus do? In order to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, and to heal others, he lived among them. He lived as the poor, hungry, and homeless. Jesus experienced the community that he served so that those in need could experience God. John explains it this way. The Word became flesh and lived among us so that the people could see the glory of God and so that the people could receive his grace. Because what they had up to that point was the law that was given to them by God through Moses. But what the people received through Jesus Christ is grace and truth. Jesus makes God know to us by bringing the word of God to life as the word became flesh and lived among us.

Jesus had a divine mission - to bring the word of God to life. Now it is not just a word to be read. And even more, it is not just a word to be studied. No, the word of God is to be experienced. Jesus had a divine mission - to bring the word of God to us. We are reminded of God's grace the question for us is what is our response to God's grace?