

Sermon on John 1:1-18
First Sunday Of Christmas
December 26, 2021
By Deacon Robert Millott

Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. AMEN

On Friday night we celebrated the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ when God was made man. Up until the birth of Jesus, no one saw God, not even Moses. God came to earth because man had become rebellious to the law God gave them. From the time Moses led his people across the Red Sea until the birth of Jesus people have never been satisfied with what God was doing for them. People have always wanted more, and quite frankly they still do. People love to be in control. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, so we would have some basic rules to live by. The first 4 are how to love God and the next 6 are how to love each other.

In Luke's story of Christmas, are all the familiar details we love to hear and read every Christmas. There is the story

of the manger, of a young woman who is about to give birth and of course the shepherds in the fields watching their flocks. Let's not forget the three Wisemen who show up quite later. We never get tired of this Gospel story. Now when John wrote his gospel, he took a completely different approach from what the other gospel writers did. John began his account of Christmas with three simple but important words: **In the beginning**...In other words, John, did not start with the birth of Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem because Jesus has always been. **"In the beginning..."** way before anything else existed such as houses, villages, roads, etc. Jesus was with his Father in Heaven. Through Him all things were made. Nothing was made without Him. We say these words when we recite the Nicene creed, one of our basic tenets of being Anglicans.

John wanted his readers to know that Jesus is God. Jesus is the Son of God from eternity. John called Jesus the **"Word"** for a reason. **"The Word"** became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus was fully human just like us. This summarizes for us what Christmas is all about. **"The Word"**, Jesus, was chosen to become human and live among us.

This is a concept that many, 2000 years ago had trouble understanding and the same can be said for today. The idea that Jesus was in Heaven with His Father and the Holy Spirit and then came down to us in the form of a little baby is amazing.

Now about six months before Jesus was born another person named John was born to his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah. You may remember that John's parents were not young like Mary who was a cousin to Elizabeth.

In Luke's gospel we are told that an Angel came to Zechariah while he was in the temple to burn incense and promised him a son. Zechariah was amazed and could not believe that his wife, who was up in years, much like Sara was when she conceived Isaac. Because Zechariah did not believe he became mute until the time John was circumcised and given his name seven days after he was born. At the circumcision rite everyone assumed that the baby would be named after his father which was the usual course taken, but Elizabeth spoke up and said, "**no!** His name will be John." The people motioned to Zechariah, and he motioned for a tablet to be brought to him. Immediately his mouth was opened, and he spoke,

giving praise to God. Shortly thereafter Zechariah said the *Benedictus* or *The Song of Zechariah*. You can find this on page 19 of the Book of Common Prayer. We read this when we do Morning Prayer.

Jesus likewise was circumcised and given His name seven days after His birth and the Church celebrates that occasion on January 1st.

John's purpose in life was to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' coming. He was a **Messenger** who was told to make crooked roads straight. Here he is quoting from Isaiah 40: 3-5 "A voice of one calling: in the dessert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low, the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it." NIV What Isaiah is telling us here is that making straight the highway in the wilderness was to remove obstacles and roll out the carpet for Our Lord. The dessert is symbolic of life's trials and sufferings. John was challenging his hearers to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

In Luke's gospel we are told that John was to "go before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17 NIV

We too, as Christians are to reflect the Light of Christ in our daily lives. John came into the world to prepare the way for Jesus to proclaim the Good News. He was a messenger. We too are messengers of the Good News. John was a messenger because the Israelites were sinners, and they should repent and be baptized. John baptized with water because he was unable to take away their sins. He was able to wash their bodies but not their hearts. John by his preaching was a forerunner of Jesus and by him baptizing, he also became a forerunner, using a symbol of a future sacrament. John wanted the Israelite people to be ready for Jesus so that He might be made known to them. Many of those who heard John thought, because they were descendants of Abraham, they were saved. John told them that was not enough. They needed to produce good fruit.

Good fruits are doing good things for our neighbors. Our neighbors are those who live next door, on the

next road, and those we meet and see in stores and other places. The crowd asked John what they must do. He told them that if they had two coats, they should share one. If anyone had extra food, they should share it. These are some of the same “good fruits” we should be doing.

As I have mentioned in the past regarding the Ten Commandments, the first four were on how we are to love God and the last six on how we are to love our neighbor. Jesus added two new commandments in John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” NIV

By us being messengers and doing good works for our neighbors we are helping them to know Christ. Doing good works could be opening the door for someone at a store. Praying for someone. Volunteering someplace such as our local food bank. Teaching Sunday school, Giving clothes to the Salvation Army. There are many ways we can all become messengers. As I have said many times in my sermons, to quote St. Francis of Assisi “Proclaim the Gospel and if necessary, use words.

In a few days we will begin the start of a new year, and a time for new beginnings. Some folks may be starting retirement or even a new job. Some may even start a new diet to lose some of the pounds gained from Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts. None of us will be starting the new year alone, not if we believe in Jesus Christ, because He has promised us that He will be with us every day of our lives. In this dark world, He brings His light of truth and love to us all. Jesus promised us life, eternal life. In a world where the past often haunts us because of our past transgressions, He chooses to forgive us our past and presents us a future that is filled with His grace and love. What a great gift that is!

Let us always pray the prayer from Hebrews 13: “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever Amen.” NIV

Hebrew 13:20-21