

***“The Word Took on Flesh”***

There are many people who take the term that “*Jesus took on flesh*” for granted. It might be words on a card or words that they hear in church and they never really make it all the way on the 16-inch journey from the head to the heart, and that is a very long and important journey, since the heart is and should truly be the filter for all important information.

I just love John's Gospel – and when someone comes into my office and say I don't know where to start reading the Bible – I tell them that a great place to start in “in the beginning.” Well, there are two “in the beginnings. There is one in which Jesus reveals Himself so richly – it is the Gospel of John. And so if you are struggling and trying to figure out where to go – well, John digs right in at the very start of his Gospel – he says, “*In the Beginning was the Word.*” The “Word” is a very important phrase – in Greek it is “logos.” “*In the Beginning was the 'logos'* and that connection takes us to the entire Bible, which is the written Word of God. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” John tells us the way in which the Bible – the long account of history, beginning with Genesis, comes to a climax through One Person - Jesus Christ – “the Word incarnate” – “*the Word, made flesh.*” Scripture tells us that in creation God spoke everything into being. In Genesis – the climax of all creation is the arrival of humanity, mankind, on the sixth day, made in God's image. The climax of John chapter 1 is the arrival of another human being, Jesus, the Word of God, taking His place as the perfect image of God – God Himself.

Throughout all of the Old Testament God repeatedly acts by means of His Word. What He says – happens, and you can count on that – God is as good as His Word. Psalm 33:6 tells us “*by the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.*” God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah about the Word of God: (Isaiah 55:10-11) “*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*” God's Word has a purpose which He always fulfills! God spoke again through Isaiah (which is so rich with prophesy) about His Word when He said in Isaiah 40:8 “*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.*” There is NO expiration date – although there are some who would like to make it so. God's Word is indelible – meaning it is permanent!

John isn't shy about what he wants to tell us – the Word is a person – the second person of the Trinity - God Himself. There is no denying the identity of the Word: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” From the beginning of time, for all eternity – the Word of God existed and is the Creator – not the created. When humanity fell from grace through disobedience – it could only be God Himself who would step into time - in order to save humanity from itself - and its sin. Listen to verse 14: “*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” We get forgiveness, enlightenment and so much more –

The First Sunday After Christmas – December 31, 2017, Year B

simply because God loves us – and we open that free gift with no strings attached. That free gift is called grace. This, by the way, is from an eyewitness who saw and heard all of the words and works of Jesus. There is no requirement for this gift – it is a gift from God! *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”* - ‘Emmanuel’ – God with us. Jesus came so that we could no longer live in fear of God’s judgment and condemnation, but so that we might have peace in our hearts - knowing that in Him we have His complete forgiveness. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 8:1 ***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** I pray that this Scripture would stay in your heart – and the fact that there is no guilt involved with this. Many people carry around a tremendous amount of baggage. The enemy likes to remind us of the things we did when we were younger – or maybe even yesterday – and he keeps reminding you. Then enemy loves to do this to you! If you know Jesus Christ and have repented of that sin – then get rid of it! It should no longer stay with you! You are not Jacob Marley carrying around a chain that you have forged through your life. With Jesus Christ you have no chain! You have the freedom of His love; the freedom of His forgiveness. So, let me repeat this: ***“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** That is a gift – that is grace – underserved – and free!

Jesus of Nazareth – Jesus the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, is the very Word who was there as Genesis put it - from the very beginning, through whom all things were made and the One who contains life and light. It was the Word who took on darkness before creation and then took on darkness in all of creation itself – by taking on flesh in which God says once more through Him *“Let there be light.”* (John 1:5) Today’s Gospel says, *“The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”* The Light of the world was right in their very midst – and they pretended that they did not recognize Him. Jesus comes into the world and the world preferred darkness to His light! Jesus told the world very clearly *“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”* (John 8:12) Jesus reminded them again *“While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.”* (John 9:5) And then once again: *“For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. “While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.”* (John 12:35-37)

If you sit in a dark room with no windows, you can't see any of the objects in that room. Even though the objects are there, you aren't aware of them because you're in darkness. However, if someone turns on the light switch, the things previously hidden from your eyes are now very obvious. Light reveals everything! Darkness cannot exist in the presence of light – it is a physical impossibility. Don't get angry at people (maybe in your families) in spiritual darkness for not being able to see what's obvious to you. Instead, we need to pray for them and bring them some spiritual light.

## The First Sunday After Christmas – December 31, 2017, Year B

Jesus tries to tell the world to carry His light in them and let it shine. He told them: *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 5:14-16) You are not doing good works to earn your way to heaven, but it is out of gratitude – and attitude of gratitude! I will never forget the words that the Lord gave me at Ein Geddi, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1999. He said, "you must do this is grateful obedience."

The Living Word of God – Jesus - came to be the fulfillment of every prophesy that was made about the Messiah, the anointed One - that God promised to His people. John tells us in 1:17-18 *"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."* On the night before Jesus died He told us who He is and how we can recognize Him. He told Thomas *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.* (Many people like to stop there – but Jesus didn't stop – He told Thomas and the disciples) *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."* (John 14:6-7) The Light of the World was right in their presence! Jesus told us He is truth – and therefore He only speaks truth. You can believe Him when He says that He - the living Word of God is the only way to the Father!

He told that truth to Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish Temple Leadership, who came to visit Jesus – at night – for fear of being caught. Jesus shared God's love with Him and the light of truth. He told him *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.* (People usually stop here as well) Jesus continued with the truth: *"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; (My brothers and sisters if you believe in Jesus Christ – there is no condemnation – you do not carry a chain like Jacob Marley!) he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."* (John 3:16-21) If you know Jesus Christ you should have no fear of your deeds being known by anyone – because there is no judgment in that - but if you do not know Jesus – today would be a very good day to start and ask Him into your life – and lose your chain! That my brothers and sisters is the truth!

The WORD took on flesh – we celebrate His incarnate deity – He became man – however you want to say it. There is no denying that! That is the truth!

The First Sunday After Christmas – December 31, 2017, Year B

The creator of the universe could have come as a king in a palace – but instead He came in a manger, where animals eat and sleep. Let me put it this way: The King of Creation accepted the limitations of infancy (submitting Himself to be waited on and have everything done for Him as a baby) under the most appalling conditions – a filthy stable. He lowered Himself to become just as one of us. He became poor so that we might become rich! God came to walk among us so that He might wrap His arms around us and embrace us.

God does not offer empty promises. By sending His Son, God has fully shown His love for us. *“in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) Because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for us on the cross, we can, through faith in Him, enter into a loving relationship with God that is everlasting – and has no expiration date! We look again at Romans 8: *“I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38-39) No strings attached – and no chains either!

Let us make the connection today –from head to heart - that Jesus, the Word of God, took on flesh – He became man – for you! St. Augustine once said, **“God loves each one of us, as if there were only one of us.”** God loves you so much that it is personal. The WORD took on flesh – for you – so that you can spend eternity with Him. That is “good news.” Don’t you agree? That is why it is called “the Gospel.”