

The Word Became Flesh | December 15, 2024

Introduction: They say, “don’t meet your heroes”. The reason is, they’ll often let you down!

How many of you have met ever your hero? It’s can be a wild experience to meet those you look up to. To see what they are like up close + personal ,“unedited” + “unfiltered”. It can be wildly good... or bad.

Christmas is the wonderful time of year where we make our way back to these familiar and cozy passages of Scripture which tell us about the miracle birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the World. We dwell richly on the reality that our God (*THE* God) is called Emmanuel, which means “God with us”. That God took on human flesh and made His home among us.

Born of a Virgin, miraculous and marvelous from the beginning. The author of the Grand Story of all Creation and Human existence, the one who formed the universe and set Galaxies into being, who made Humanity *in His image*, forming them with his hands and breathing his breath of life into them, came down and ***participated in His own unfolding drama***. It is the greatest story ever told. **May this story NEVER GET OLD TO US!**

- If you are anything like me, then you be may be tempted to tune out when you discover it’s a Christmas Message. “I’ve heard this all before... Bethlehem, Baby in a manger, Angels and Wise Men... got it!” **Can I encourage you – don’t tune out this Christmas. Rather, lean in!**
- Reengage with the story and allow the wonder of the Incarnation – that is the blessed truth that God came in flesh to dwell among His own people, His creation – permeate your heart till it overflows with wonder and praise! We return to this theme every year for it is beautiful... **and we know that HE HAS COME, and so we know HE IS COMING! So lean in.**
- **They say “don’t meet your heroes”... but in this case, we did!** And he did not disappoint. And one day, we will see him again, face to face. He is coming back again. He won’t disappoint!
- Jesus is the ultimate hero that won’t let you down. But the question remains – how will you respond to Him; to the Christ, the Messiah that was born of a virgin in a small town called Bethlehem, that came “*to save His people from their sins*”?

Main Point: “*The Son of God became a man to enable men to become Sons of God.*” (C.S. Lewis)

Read John 1:1-14

A| The Word Made Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

What an epic line, amen? Out of curiosity, does this opening line from John remind you of anything...? Say, another opening line from some other great book? **As in... THE BOOK OF GENESIS!**

- ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*** Genesis 1:1
- **The question is, why would John start His book in such a similar way?** Was this merely coincidence, or intentional? The answer is most definitely ***intentional!***
 - By opening His book in this way, John is directing the readers mind back to Genesis 1, to the beginning... and even further yet still.
 - What could be before the beginning? ONLY GOD. That is, in a way, His definition.
 - The Bible opens with the beautiful account of God creating the world (Genesis 1 + 2).
 - **Woven throughout the chapter there are two repeated lines:**

- **Line #1:** *“And God said...”*
- **Line #2:** *“And there was...”*
- By this method, God *spoke* the Heavens & Earth into existence! That’s POWER.
- This is to say, God created by using words... or more accurately, through **THE WORD. His Word.**
- This concept was well known by John and he assumes His readers would recognize this vocabulary from the Old Testament Scriptures too, though it may be missed by modern readers.
 - By the **word of the Lord** the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth... For **he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.** Ps. 33:6, 9
 - J.I. Packer in “Knowing God” describes The Word as *“...his creative utterance, his power in action fulfilling his purpose. The Old Testament depicted God’s utterance, the actual statement of his purpose, as having power in itself to effect the thing purposed... The Word of God is thus God at work.”*
 - There is a felt sense and understanding that the Word of God is somehow personified throughout the Old Testament... but there is mystery to it. To discover more on this, check out P. Stefan’s message titled “Jesus, the Hero of the Story” from May 5, 2024.
- **Who is The Word?** That’s precisely what John is trying to tell us in his prologue!! **Ready for it?!**
 - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **with God**, and the Word **was God**. **HE** was with God in the beginning. Through **HIM** all things were made; without **HIM** nothing was made that has been made... **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.** John 1:1-3, 14*
 - **This is absolutely STUNNING!** The baby in the manger is none other than – GOD in flesh!
 - **Try to wrap your head around it... yet it is unfathomable.** The one who spoke the universe into existence is being held in the arms of a young mother. *There is great mystery to it... we can’t comprehend it, but at the same time we can grasp it (in part).*
 - **Here is Jesus, The Word made flesh!**

Jesus is ‘The Divine Word’ of God, the Creator of all things: This truth is repeated throughout the N.T.

- *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created **through him** and **for him**. **He is before all things**, and in him all things hold together... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him... Colossians 1:15-16, 19*
- *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of **Christ, who is the image of God**. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of **God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ**. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6*
- *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and **the exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Hebrews 1:3*

*CONTEXT: The Purpose Of John's Gospel (why does this matter?)

- In order for us to grasp WHY this is so important to John (and for all Christians), we need to understand the purpose for which John wrote his Gospel. John actually tells us his purpose, only its most clearly found *at the end* of his book.
 - o *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written **that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may HAVE LIFE** in his name. John 20:30-31*
- In a broad sense, the purpose of John's Gospel is twofold: **1]** to reveal the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah (saviour), the 'one and only' Son of God (that is to say **God in the Flesh**)... **AND 2]** to invite us on behalf of God to **share in His life**! This is seen throughout John's writing.
 - o *For God so loved the world that he gave his **one and only Son**, that whoever believes in him shall not perish **but have eternal life**. John 3:16*
 - o *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they **may have life**, and have it to the full. John 10:10*
 - o *In **him was life**, and that life was the light of all mankind. John 1:4*
 - o *A note on 'LIFE'... the word used for life here is Greek **ZÓÉ**: In the New Testament, "zóé" refers to life in its fullest sense, encompassing **both physical** and **spiritual** dimensions. It is often used to describe the eternal life that is granted through faith in Jesus Christ. This life is not merely an unending existence but a **quality of life that is abundant and fulfilling**, characterized by a relationship with God. (Strong's Lexicon - 2222. zóé)
 - In other words, Jesus isn't a *means to an end*, but the *end in and of himself*, and the means of getting there. **HE IS LIFE (zóé)**. And he came to give us life, not just in quantity, but in quality also. Jesus is REAL LIFE.*

B| The World Did Not Recognize Him (*The Radical Humility Of God*)

*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. **He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. John 1:9-11*

Do you remember that show *Undercover Boss*? It's been years since I have seen the show, but the premise is simple: a CEO or high-ranking employee disguises his or herself and takes on the role of a lower ranking employee. From this vantage the CEO is able to get a look at what their company is really like through the eyes of an everyday employee... plus, it's a reality TV show so I'm sure there is some good drama and "busted" moments in it.

- The concept is intriguing though, isn't it? It shows the difference in perspective and experience between a CEO and the lowest ranking employee; it would be significant. Consider then how much greater the difference between GOD (creator) and humanity (created) must be.
 - o **YHWH, The Lord stepped onto the scene to walk among His own creation.** Admittedly this is difficult to grasp, **but consider (if you can) the radical humility of God!**
 - o **"...and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him."** God came to his own "house" and was treated as a guest... an unwelcomed one.
 - o **Jesus never ceased being GOD.** Consider that the world is at His fingertips. It's HIS for the rightful taking, meaning that Jesus COULD HAVE chosen to come to earth in any way he wanted. **And before he chose the cross, He chose the manger. WOW!**

- **The plot twist of the century...** Jesus' miraculous birth, *and furthermore His life*, went unrecognized by many. *Yes, many did rightfully recognize & receive Him, but many did not.*
- The Savior of the World was not found in a lavish palace as you might expect... He is God after all. But rather, likely born in a stable, He was placed in a manger among cattle. He left the Hall of Heaven and came to us and as Luke records, we had no room for him **(Luke 2:7)**.
 - **History shows that power *usually* corrupts people, and "total power corrupts totally".** If you or I had the world at our fingertips, would we choose to come in such a meek way?
- He didn't come *demanding* recognition as King (although clear evidence of His identity was available for those that desired to know). Rather, He came in a humble, unassuming manner to seek and to save broken humanity and ultimately to lay His life down for those that challenged His right to rule as Lord and King. ***THIS IS HUMILITY LIKE NO OTHER!***
 - In comparison, prideful humanity is so often driven by the need/desire to be recognized. Isn't that true? We do a small act of kindness, and something within the flesh wells up desiring to be noticed or thanked for our contributions. How completely unlike us is God.
 - **Again before he chose the cross, He chose the manger.**
 - *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Phil. 2:6-8*

J.I. Packer: *We see now what it meant for the Son of God to empty himself and become poor. It meant a laying aside of glory; a VOLUNTARY restraint of power... It meant love to the uttermost for unlovely human beings, that they through his poverty might become rich. The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity—hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory—because at the Father's will Jesus Christ became poor and was born in a stable so that thirty years later he might hang on a cross. It is the most wonderful message that the world has ever heard, or will hear. (J.I. Packer, Knowing God)*

- **What ought this mean for us? Packer concludes:** *It ought to mean the reproducing in human lives of the temper of him who for our sakes became poor at the first Christmas. And the Christmas spirit itself ought to be the mark of every Christian all the year round.*

Reflection: Behold your King, humble and lowly, laying in the manger! How will we respond?

- **Remember how we talked about our call to be servants in September?** *We have received the HIGHEST CALL to the LOWEST position – that of a servant. Why? Because Jesus was a servant. Jesus washed his disciples feet and in so doing gave them an example to follow.*
 - Similarly, the incarnation reminds us of the depths of God's great love. He loved us enough to send his one and only Son, assuming the lowly position of a servant – a baby born to die. But more than that, to LIVE! Jesus came to show us the Father and to impart LIFE TO US. He came to serve us that we may serve one another in the same way.
 - **Christian, is there any job (or mission field) 'beneath you'?** Has title, or status, or comfort become a tripping hazard in your life? How can you grow in humility this Christmas?

C| The Right To Become Children Of God

*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **YET** to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, **he gave the right to become children of God**— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:11-13*

Over the last three weeks Pastor Stefan has been talking to us about what the Bible says regarding our **IDENTITY**. Our identity in Christ, as well as our value and worth as human beings, made in the Image of God. **Pastor Stefan repeated:** *"You will never know who you are until you know whose you are."*

- This is where I want us to end. The Christmas Story is a key scene in the greatest story ever told!! The Incarnation is when God, so rich in mercy, sent His one and only Son into the world that he created... into the darkness... into our brokenness, in order to save us.
 - o **Do you want to know who you are? Your identity? Your value, your worth to God? Then consider Him, the Word made Flesh. He says, "Call Me FATHER. I want to call you my CHILD!"**
 - o **C.S. Lewis, *"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."***

Consider again for a moment how God *COULD HAVE COME*. (Phil Wickham song, 'Manger Throne')

He could have come as a LION, yet he chose at His first coming to come as a LAMB. Jesus could have come the first time as a RIGHTEOUS JUDGE to settle accounts with humanity for our rebellion. He had every reason to judge us, to condemn us, to put us in our place. Yet, we find the opposite at Christmas.

- Instead of serving us our sentence, He came to serve us and put our needs before His own.
- Instead of putting us in our place, He took our place.

Again, Lewis said, *"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."*

This is what on offer to each one in this room (and those joining online) today! Jesus says to us "COME!" He says, "COME, AS YOU ARE!". You don't have to clean yourself up before you make your way back home to Him. Come as you are – but He loves us too much to leave us that way. Let me finish with one last line from C.S. Lewis.

- *"In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity... But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him."* (C.S. Lewis, Miracles)
- *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16-17*

COME! Let us adore Him, Christ the Lord. The Word Made Flesh!

Do you know Christ? Maybe you're here today and you recognize the name or the story, but you have not yet come to call Him Savior, Lord and FATHER? **Come to Him today!**

- Maybe you're here today and you have already come to recognize Jesus as Lord, Savior and Father, but your first love has grown cold? You've been on the journey of formation, and perhaps you have grown tired, weary or jaded. **Jesus says to you today – COME.**
 - o It's significant to me that Jesus didn't come as a fully grown man, but as a child! He spent approximately 30 years in seclusion and obscurity. If there was a wait and a process of formation for Jesus who was sinless... how much more for us?

Church, this is what Christmas is all about. God has written the GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD. It's complete – we even know the end of the story, and it's a MASTERPEICE. He is coming back again.

- The Incarnation, where Jesus came in meekness to dwell as a humble baby, speaks of God's tender heart. His desire is that ALL would come to Him and know their identity as Children of God! But he gives us a choice. How will you respond?

- ***YET to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...*** John 1:12

COME! Let us adore Him, Christ the Lord. You and I were made for more!