

January 5, 2020

2nd Sunday Of Christmas

Year A

“He who became flesh”

The first wonder of Christmas and one that carries throughout Jesus' life here on earth. He was human. He was flesh and blood --- - real --- like you and me with all of its wonder and all of its frailty.

I can't help but think of how very fragile this human flesh is --- how from the start we are so very vulnerable to wound and disease. And to think that God's Own Son would take this on in our behalf? To think that Jesus would come as one of us. When I pause in this simple truth, it takes my breath away.

For this human flesh will not last as long as that plastic baby doll we placed in the manger on Christmas Eve. (I'm told that given the right conditions, that one's life span could be indefinite!) In fact, as I writing this, I find myself remembering an old song called "Plastic Jesus" which was recorded in the early 1960's. You can look up the lyrics or listen to it sung elsewhere online, but here is the Wikipedia summary. If you haven't heard it before, it may be

helpful to know that it was 'inspired' by a radio station in Del Rio, Texas in the late 1950's "which was run by a dentist and religious fanatic who sold the most outrageous stuff imaginable, all with magical healing properties." It is a spoof, of course, and speaks to our certainty that inanimate objects in and of themselves cannot protect us or save us. At least not in the way Jesus --- the Word become flesh ---did and does.

And so, it is that we pause here on the far edge of the Christmas season to marvel once again that "the Word became flesh." With all of its risk and all of its promise, Jesus became one of us. No, this is no 'Plastic Jesus' --- even if we have to use such as that to represent him in a barn on Christmas Eve. This Jesus lived like us, as we did and do. Oh, just think of it: God stooping to this for you and me! And of course, you and I who know the rest of the story know exactly what happened to the 'Word become flesh' who lived and died among us. That, of course, is the greatest wonder of all!

Who came first, God the Creator or the Logos? Why does it matter?” And second, “What does it mean that God became flesh? Why would God put Godself into that kind of situation?”

These types of questions often come about in discussing complex issues of life and faith. God was before time, in time, and outside of time. Time is different when discussing God and the incarnation.

Jesus is the Word and the Word is also God. The Word gives light and life. And the Word is not always accepted. The Word was Jesus and the Word is the biblical text understood through the life and actions of Jesus. The Word is the embodiment of God in the world.

God choosing to put skin on and walk among us is one of the pivotal points in salvation history, which begins with the redemption of the Hebrew people and continues in the story of Jesus, his ministry with his disciples, and his death and resurrection. This point of Jesus being fully human and fully divine has been a bone of

contention in history and continues to baffle some in the faith today. But for me it is one of the most important principles of the faith -- that God loved the world so much that God came to dwell among us, teach us, and die for us. How have you come to think of 'the Word becoming flesh?' What does this wonder mean to you?

I think this is why these verses grabbed my attention this year. Each year at just about this time, you see, I wish Christmas would last a little longer. We give Easter seven weeks, Pentecost three times that much, and even Lent and Advent six and four Sundays apiece, but Christmas is only twelve short days. And, truth be told, because of the shortness of our cultural attention span and the rise of New Year's Eve as a significant holiday, Christmas barely gets a week of our attention before it is lost in the shuffle of resolutions and bills and all the rest. But these verses remind us that Christmas isn't just a season, it's a way of life. Christmas isn't over when we reach Epiphany, it is only newly launched once again. While the season may pass, the hope and life it promises are just beginning.

Christmas reminds us of God's decision to become one of us, to take on our lot and our life that we might have hope, and to share our mortal life that we might enjoy God's eternal life. This is not merely a season or celebration; it is a promise that requires our active participation every day of the year. God's condescension simultaneously glorifies human flesh and endeavors. Our lives matter to God. Our welfare is of tremendous importance to the Almighty. There is no worry too small, no challenge too great, that God is not eager to share it with us. Indeed, God is eager to equip and empower us to share our worries and challenges, as well as our joys and hopes, with each other. As because of God's decision to come to us in a form we recognize, we are empowered to reach out to those around us.

The telling of Jesus' birth in simple and homely ways in Matthew, Mark and Luke make for powerful images and create a sense of connection we can see replayed every year in Christmas

**Pageants across the globe. But John goes another way. He utilizes
“grander theological declarations” in his Prologue to bring us into
the story of salvation.**

When Mary’s baby walked the earth things changed.

When Mary’s baby walked this earth

People came from miles around to sit at his feet

And hear the wisdom that could only come from God.

They brought the sick, the lame,

And those who were troubled

In their minds.

The winds and the seas had to obey him

Because he was Emmanuel, God with us.

Formidable demons trembled

And ran away screaming

When Mary’s baby walked upon this earth.

God is Emmanuel. Jesus, the Word, was made flesh. God walked around in skin. And it changed the world.

It is not enough, of course, to stand still in this wonder. How does this truth of Christmas speak to our callings as individuals and as congregations? How does faith in the living Jesus lead us to still 'become flesh' for the sake of the world?

It is just that simple, it is just that hard.

Thanks be to God.