

John 1:1-14

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

²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And 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.

Introduction

What does it mean for God to be made flesh? Donald Miller, an author who I admire, wrote this about God as flesh in a book called *Blue Like Jazz*. He writes:

I once listened to an Indian on television say that God was in the wind and the water, and I wondered at how beautiful that was because it meant you could swim in Him or have Him brush your face in a breeze. I am early in my story, but I believe I will stretch out into eternity, and in heaven I will reflect upon these early days, these days when it seemed God was down a dirt road, walking toward me. Years ago He was a swinging speck in the distance; now He is close enough I can hear His singing. Soon I will see the lines on His face.

What does it mean for God to be made flesh? This idea is called the 'incarnation' in the study of religion. We have heard the Christmas story; how our faith tradition explains it on this Christmas Day. We read in the gospels of Matthew and Luke the story of a small baby boy, born on a quiet night in a manger, while all around a chaotic world waits for such a savior.

The Gospel of John does not focus on trying to create an historical account of God made flesh. Instead, John illustrates the spiritual, or theological, understanding of the incarnation. So let's take a look at this text a little more closely...

Scripture

We begin with verse 1: The Word; more than just a word, but the divine spoken throughout eternity.

We go on in verse 4 to read 'What has come into being ⁴in him was life' that Life is a gift of God; this is more than simply living day to day, but the spiritual life as Jesus alludes to in his conversations throughout this gospel.

v. 10 ...yet the world did not know him. Why? And v. 11...his own people did not accept him. Here we have the story of the beginning, but also an understanding of how the story ends...more of a prequel.

Here, in verses 12 and 13 we have what John will focus throughout this gospel account of Christ:

v. 12 to those who did believe, they became children of God

v. 13 here we have a message about being born of God, or **reborn** of God. Jesus will describe this as being born again.

And here in v. 14 we have this theological term which will later be called the incarnation: the Word became flesh, lived on this earth, we are witnesses

v. 14 we call him God's only son

And I want us to meditate upon these two words found in verse 14 as we think of God as flesh this day:

v. 14 the Word as full of grace and truth

Grace and truth. These may be simple words to some, but this is where the Gospel lies this Christmas Day. This is God as reality this day. We hear it in the words of the books and songs alike, from ancient times to today.

Grace and Truth. This is how I experience this world, and how I experience the divine. In the midst of the chaos and uncertainty of the world, God is present and real in grace. Grace is an unwarranted gift, much like that of what we try to exemplify on Christmas. We don't give gifts to show how much we have, but we give without expectation, without reward. This is what God's grace is all about in our lives. Jesus taught us this in his actions and words. God asks nothing in return. We are loved because we are God's children.

Truth is our certain knowing, and it goes beyond what we can 'prove' with science or books. And what do we know and celebrate on this day? **That God is present in the world.** That there is new birth in the world, even in the midst of darkness. That God calls us to such rebirth each and every day. Everything else in this world that we arrogantly proclaim as truth: security, money, education, power....that's not ultimate truth—those are illusions that we have constructed with our finite minds. Truth is found in Christ this day, and experienced in the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Response

People have been trying to communicate such a lofty idea since the beginning of human history. What does it mean for God to be flesh?

I'll admit I'm an extremely logical and rational person, and that I've struggled with the logistical side of the Christmas story ever since I was a child, and I dare to believe that I'm not alone in this. To be honest, it doesn't matter to me that Mary was or was not a virgin. It doesn't concern me whether there were actual wisemen or shepherds arriving to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. **What does matter to me was the experience of those back then, and the experience of us today, of the living Christ—a savior, intimately involved in our lives in a real way.** This is why I identify with John so much; it is the spiritual birth that is important. And this is where all the gospels, and Christians of different opinions and perspectives from around the world can agree: God is intimately involved in our daily lives.

Maybe the important response, the Christmas story, is not how to explain the flesh of God, as much as it is to explain **how God is real in our lives.** What does it mean for God to be real? Our reality...how we experience the world, is how we communicate the movement of the divine, as finite as our own understandings may be.

So how do you experience God today? And further, how do you communicate your experience of the Divine to others? This experience of Christ today emanates in different ways.

One of my favorite worship songs I've been listening to these days is by the David Crowder Band, with the song 'How He Loves'. Listen to the experience of God in these words:

He is jealous for me. Loves like a hurricane, I am a tree; bending beneath the weight of his wind and mercy. When all of a sudden, I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory.

And I realise just how beautiful You are, and how great Your affections are for me.

We are His portion and He is our prize. Drawn to redemption by the **grace** in His eyes.

If **grace** is an ocean, we're all sinking. So Heaven meets earth like an unforeseen kiss, and my heart turns violently inside of my chest. I don't have time to maintain these regrets when I think about the way how he loves us.

Celebration

God is realized here today in the flesh throughout all of the world, as we gaze upon God's creation, as we see Christ within the other, and as we embody Christ today in worship as the Church. This Christmas day all of creation together joins to sing the song of grace and truth, as we too are called to live our lives in response to such a message.

What an invitation we have this day to share. The message of God's grace and truth for all of Creation.

Today is Christmas Day, the day in which we celebrate God coming to the world in the flesh. Let us rejoice with such Good News!