

The Word Became Flesh - Christmas Eve 2023

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[0 : 0 0] And I would ask that if you are able, if you would take a copy of God's Word, if you didn't bring a Bible with you, that's okay. You came to the right place. We actually have Bibles here for you.

And there's some in the seat backs there in front of you. But I do encourage you to open up to the passage that we just read from the Gospel according to John, verses 1 through 14 of chapter 1.

John chapter 1, verses 1 through 14. What is the message of Christmas? Christmas is tomorrow morning. Big news. Hopefully you know that by now.

What is the message of Christmas? How would you summarize it? How would you put it into your own words? I wonder how many of us, despite going through the past month and hearing the carols sung, maybe you've been a part of church services over the past month, how many of us truly understand the message of Christmas?

I was asked to give the message of the Gospel at the German Christmas market here in Allendahl just a few weeks ago. Some of you may have been there. I'm not sure. It's a wonderful opportunity for me the second year in a row that I've had a chance to go over there and share the Gospel.

[1 : 1 6] They give me an open opportunity to share at the fireside with whoever would be there and whoever the Lord might bring. They said, I want you to share the Gospel and the message of Christmas and you have two minutes to do it.

Which is an impossible task for a preacher to do. And so what I shared was the message that we just heard, the message of the angels from the Gospel of Luke.

They said, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy for all peoples. I shared that the Gospel is a message of good news.

Christ has come. It's a message of good news of great joy that He's come to save us from our sins. The response ought to be joy that our sins are forgiven, that we're made right with God.

And that this is good news of great joy for all people. The best news of all is that anybody can get in on it. That was two minutes. And tonight I have more time than that.

[2 : 1 7] And so what we're going to do is we're going to look to the Gospel of John. And let him help us understand what exactly we're celebrating at Christmastime. You know, typically, when we think about the Christmas story, we tend to go to Matthew and we tend to go to Luke.

And poor John gets a little bit ignored. And that's for good reason. Matthew and Luke give a little bit more detail about the birth narratives of Christ. Mark ignores it altogether. I guess he assumes you know it by now.

But John, he zooms out of the details of the birth of Jesus. And he gives us a big picture view of what God is doing in the birth of Christ.

So this evening, as we look through verses 1 through 14 of John chapter 1, what we'll see tonight is that the birth of Jesus is a wonderful present given because of a terrible problem that comes with an incredible promise.

Three brief points for us this evening. Not two minutes brief, but brief enough. A wonderful present, a terrible problem, and an incredible promise.

[3 : 32] First, we see that the birth of Jesus is a wonderful present. It's a wonderful present. We celebrate Jesus' birth because it's good news.

It's good news of great joy. It's a wonderful present. The heart of what we celebrate at Christmastime is the wonderful gift of Jesus' birth.

I think personally that all births are worth celebrating. Now, I remember distinctly the birth of all three of my children. We have three boys. I remember the announcement very distinctly when my wife, Amanda, shared with me that she was pregnant.

She's expecting a child that my life is about to change. A baby is coming into the world. It was good news of great joy. And then I remember, of course, the birth of each individual child, their entrance into the world.

I remember how they were welcomed into the world with gifts. Family came to celebrate. We had loved ones nearby. Their births were celebrated.

[4 : 40] And every year at Christmastime, of course, we're celebrating the birth of Jesus. In fact, at our house tomorrow morning, we'll wake up. My kids are excited to eat birthday cake for breakfast.

We do that every single year. In one of our traditions, we celebrate Jesus' birth with a birthday cake for breakfast. We celebrate the birth of Jesus. But what John is telling us here is that this is much more than just the birth of any ordinary child.

He wants to clue us in that this birth, the arrival of Jesus into the world, is anything but ordinary. And what we celebrate at Christmastime is the birth of the Son of God.

What we call the incarnation. God become man. John tells us that this Jesus that we celebrate at Christmastime is the eternal Word of God.

This is no ordinary child. He says, He says, That's a really complicated way to phrase that sentence, isn't it?

[6 : 15] He's trying to say that everything that you see, everything that you know in this creation, was made through this baby in a manger. Was made through Jesus Christ.

He tells us that Jesus, before He ever took His first breath, He already had life. His beginning as a baby was not His beginning. He was there in the beginning.

He says in verse 4, In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And then He tells us that this light, it shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not overcome it.

What He's telling us is that this birth is no ordinary birth. This is the birth of God Himself in the flesh.

That's what we celebrate at Christmas. It's the incarnation, the coming of Emmanuel, God with us. Verse 14. Verse 14. If you look there with me, it tells us that this eternal Word, the one who was with God, the one who is God, the one through whom all things were made, this eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[7 : 26] And we have seen His glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. What a wonderful gift.

God Himself has come down to us. The light of the world has come. Life has come down to us. Light has come down to us.

This is good news, church. But of course, that won't make any sense to you whatsoever if you don't understand the reason why He came. The Creator of the world stepped into His creation in order to redeem it.

This is second. Point number two. He came because of a terrible problem. This world needs redemption, church.

I would be willing to bet that all of us, whether or not you're even a believer, whether or not you're a church-going person, if you're a Christian or not, I think all of us would agree that this world is not as it should be.

[8 : 34] Amen? Things are broken. Systems are broken. Politicians, leaders are broken. Countries are broken.

This world is not as it should be. It's messed up. And if we're honest, we would say that we are a little bit messed up, too. We don't think the things that we think that we should think.

We don't do the things that we know we ought to do. Something is off here, even with us. Plenty of people have tried to explain everything that's wrong with the world.

There's plenty of philosophies out there. But the Bible, the way that the Bible explains all of the messed upness of our world and all of the messed upness of our lives is sin.

We are sinners. And the world we live in is in rebellion against God. That is our problem.

[9 : 33] And I want you to know that Christians are no better than anybody else. Sometimes when Christians speak about sin, it might come across, you might perceive that to be judgmental.

If we talk about sin. I want you to know Christians are no better than anybody else. We are sinners just like you. The only difference is that we have, by the grace of God alone, come to see our sin.

And come to realize our need for help for a Savior. And the Savior, Jesus Christ. You may wonder why Christians speak so much about Jesus.

Well, this is why. We believe He's the Savior of the world. He's the only answer for the brokenness that all of us experience day in and day out in a world that is cursed by sin.

So we bear witness about the light. We do just as John the Baptist does here in verse 7. We bear witness about the light that all might believe through Him.

[10 : 37] We are not the light. We go to bear witness about the light. If you ever wonder why Christians keep talking so much about Jesus, again, it's because we believe He is the light of the world.

If the world is in darkness, there's only one solution. It's not to trust in more darkness. It's to turn to the light of the world. What we celebrate at Christmas is the good news that this light has come down to us.

So we bear witness that all might believe in Him. In fact, in just a little while, if I don't knock my candle off of the podium here, we're going to light these candles as we sing Silent Night together.

And I hope that you will see this as a visual illustration for you. It's not just a tradition. This is a visual lesson for you of what the glory of King Jesus looks like in the midst of our dark and broken world.

But here's the tragic problem. Look there to verse 9 with me. John 1 verse 9. He says, The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

[11 : 49] He was in the world. The world was made through Him. Yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, to His own people.

And His own people did not receive Him. I mean, can you imagine? Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, came in the humblest way imaginable, born as a baby.

And how was He received? Almost instantly He was rejected. No room for Him in the end. King Herod wanted Him killed before He was born.

And as soon as He heard that there was another king born in His region, He was despised. He was rejected. He was mocked. And eventually this Son of God was crucified.

Can you imagine to have God Himself come down to you, offer Himself to you, and for you to turn Him away? For the light of the world to come down to you, and for you to prefer darkness.

[12 : 53] That's exactly what's happening in the world around us. Anywhere where Christ is rejected.

And that's exactly what's happening in any heart that rejects Jesus Christ. Every place, every person who rejects Him is denying the light of the world.

You know, we hear this good news that the light has come, and we shut our ears, and we shut our eyes. Because if we're honest, in our sinful flesh, we prefer the darkness.

That's sin in our hearts. That is an incredible problem. My friend, it doesn't have to be that way. Because here at Christmas, we celebrate the good news, third, that He came to make an incredible promise to any who would receive Him by faith.

Look at this, verse 12. He says, Did you hear that promise?

[14 : 14] That any who receive Him, and how do you receive Him? Not by being good. It's not by being born into the right family. Not by being born at the right time in the right place.

It's not by just trying your best. Not by piecing your life together. It's not by anything in you at all. You receive Jesus as a gift by simple faith alone.

And He says, To any who receive Him by simply believing in Him through faith in Him are given the right to become children of God.

What a promise. That promise, friend, is extended to you this evening. Anyone who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith alone will be transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

And will be adopted as sons and daughters of the living God. He invites you this evening to give Him all of your mess. To give Him your absolute worst.

[15 : 26] And to receive from Him His absolute best. That's the worst gift exchange in the history of mankind. That's what Jesus came to do.

At Christmas, we celebrate the good news that He was born of man that we might be born of God. That He stooped down low that He might raise us up.

That He became like us that sinners like us might become like Him. That He defeated death. That any who come to Him in faith can join Him in resurrection life forever.

That He who was rich became poor. So that we who are poor might enter into the riches of His glory. You know, one of my favorite Christmas hymns is, Thou Who Was Rich Beyond All Splendor.

It's not a popular one. I'm assuming y'all probably maybe aren't familiar with it. That's okay. But it comes from what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9.

[16 : 29] Where he says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.

Do you hear that gloriously unfair exchange? Jesus offers you by grace alone, through faith in this wonderful gift.

I love to read the words of that hymn and think about them at Christmas time. It helps me to remember the true message of Christmas. It goes like this.

Thou who was rich beyond all splendor, all for love's sake becameest poor. Thrones for a manger did surrender.

Sapphire paved courts for stable floor. Thou who was rich beyond all splendor, all for love's sake becameest poor. Thou who art God beyond all praising, all for love's sake becameest man.

[17 : 36] Stooping so low, but sinners raising. Heavenward by thine eternal plan. Thou who art God beyond all praising, all for love's sake becameest man.

Thou who art love beyond all telling. Savior and King, we worship Thee. Emmanuel within us dwelling. Make us what Thou wouldst have us be. Thou who art love beyond all telling.

Savior and King, we worship Thee. Church, this is why the gospel is good news. Of great joy for all people.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You. And we do praise You for the good news of the gospel. We thank You, Father, for sending Jesus.

To be born as a child. To be born as a baby. In our likeness, yet without sin. You stepped into our mess to redeem us. Who least deserve it.

[18 : 35] We love You, Lord. And we pray, if there are any here this evening who don't know You, Father, would You save them this Christmas? Would You turn their hearts to their Messiah?

And Lord, for those who have received this gift, Father, again, would You warm our hearts to worship You with fresh joy this evening for who You are. We love You and we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.