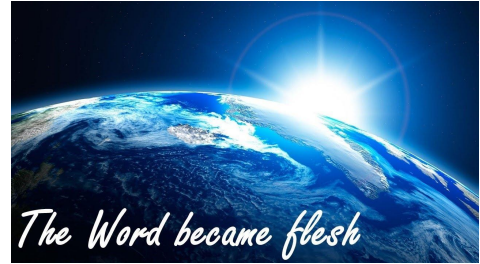


The Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less

The Word Became Flesh (Week 1) - God's Word Among Us:



- 1) This Advent season, we're going to pay attention to the epic, grand story being told behind and beneath all those familiar Christmas passages about a courageous, teenage, unwed mother to be, shepherds encountering angels in a field, and a savior child born in obscurity; to do that, we'll be spending this holiday season in John 1.1-18, called John's prologue.
- 2) The genius of John, as is also true of most of St. Paul's writings, is that he presents Jesus in a way that is equally relatable and understandable to the two dissimilar groups reading his gospel: Jews, who would have been familiar with the Old Testament, and Greco-Romans, also called Gentiles, who had no such background.
- 3) The very first example of this accessible way of explaining Jesus is his use of the label "Word" (in Greek, logos) for Jesus.
- 4) To those familiar with the Old Testament, the parallel between John 1.1-3 and Genesis 1.1-3 fairly leaps off the page, not to mention that both passages climax with human beings, for John God's Word taking on human flesh (see Gen. 1.26-28; Jn. 1.14).
- 5) So, for John, Christmas is the beginning of a new creation story, brought about through the work and message of God's embodied Word, Jesus.
- 6) The beginning of new creation in Christ presents all human beings with a choice: will I choose the tired, broken, normal but sadly abnormal ways of the old world that is passing away, or will I give my life to be a part of God's newness that's emerging?
- 7) John 1.1-3 describes the first of all realities, something that precedes even creation itself: God and His Word have always been together, meaning whatever else is true of God's character, He is a God who yearns to communicate.
- 8) But this has proven to be problematic for Him - how can God, being so very different from everything and everyone else, communicate clearly, given that an audible voice from heaven or a multitude of miracles are readily misinterpreted (see Matt. 12, and Jn. 12.28-29 and 12.37).
- 9) The best - maybe even the only - answer was for that God, who is wholly Other, to "climb down to be among us" (Karl Barth): by taking on human flesh God's Word - His message - could speak as a human to humans.

10) So, for John, Christmas is the beginning of God's best shot at communicating with us: Jesus, His embodied Word, is what He wants to say to us, divine life, Himself, and everything in between.

Quotes to Consider

About the choice to be a part of the old, passing creation or the new one emerging in Christ:

"The truth of God newness is that God's gift comes at huge cost, the cost of acknowledging that the old creation has failed and is dysfunctional, and the awareness that new creation required disciplined, intentional reception...The move from old to new creation entails a bewildering loss of control that comes from relinquishing what we've known...We ought to remember that God's future does not belong to what has been, and our old, assured realities. The God who does this new thing has also said that we need not go back to our former things."

About Christ as the centerpiece of what God is trying to say to us:

"For the Christian, Jesus Christ is our tuning fork, ringing out middle C in a shrill world of competing truths; His pitch defines reality and sets every other note in its proper place. Without Him, truth about God would be distorted, disharmonious. To hear the music of heaven, we must listen and only listen to Him." (Donald McCullough, in The Trivialization of God)

About embracing mystery, in our case right now, the mystery of Advent:

"Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous to be understood...Let me keep my distance, always, from those who think they have the answers. Let me keep company always with those who say 'Look!' and laugh in astonishment, and bow their heads." (poet Mary Oliver)

A Prayer for the 1st Week of Advent

Adapted from the Anglican Church of New Zealand:

"God of all hope and joy, open our lives in welcome to Your Son Jesus Christ this Advent season. May He find in us a dwelling place, and may we clear space for Him in our hearts that are too often full of that which is urgent, fretful, and unimportant."

"May we see anew the mystery and power of the gift of Jesus, a wonder so extraordinary that it can – and will – change the world. We ask this of You, Your Son, and Your Spirit, who live and reign forevermore, amen."