

Christmass I
St. John 1:1-18
January 1st 2017
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

IN A WORD

And 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.

Words are powerful, but one wonders whether words can exist without a brain to comprehend them? The Word of God was made clear in the Holy Scriptures handed down for centuries in the Hebrew community. God for the most part was unseen, save for a few like Moses, however, most people believed in this unseen God. But I am sure they had their questions from time to time. Job did.

While words can lift us to new heights, it is very difficult to warm up to a word, even if the word is LOVE. We can appreciate them in scripture. We can love them in literature. We can admire and be inspired by them in a poem or a song. Words are very special.

The Word was God and the Word was with God. All things were made by the Word, and without the Word, was not anything made that is made. God came to be known, down through the centuries, by the things God has made. Consider a beautiful flower, or a pastoral meadow bedecked with flowers cresting above the grasses. Consider such natural wonders as the Grand Canyon, or a majestic waterfall, or the Cathedral of trees soaring above you when you go for a walk in the woods. Consider the new fallen snow as it spreads out before you at

dusk, as the sun sinks over the hills. All of this is the creation of the Word of God. The Word was spoken, and these wonders came into being, just as it was spoken and you and I came into being, by the Grace of this unseen Word.

Have you heard the still small voice of God whisper a Word in your ear? For many, hearing the Word of God speak is the harvest of a fertile prayer life of regular communication with God. Occasionally that voice is loud and direct. Often we experience the Word spoken quite softly, sometimes indirectly through another person's words to us, in a dream, or in the pages of a spiritual book, starting with the Bible. Sometimes the Word is heard in a great piece of literature or in the words of a poem. God has spoken to me at times in the words of the writer Charles Dickens. And sometimes that Word is heard in the most common of places, in a magazine, a newspaper or some other thing you picked up to read.

You know there is something special in such a set of Words. They literally pop out of the page at you and invite you to ponder them, irresistibly. Such an encounter with a Word spoken to you can change the course of your life.

And I have heard the Word of God spoken to me through the voices of close friends if I am listening closely. You know you are hearing something special, something important that you need to hear. You can sense the truth when it is spoken to you in a few choice words. And in hindsight we can sometimes hear these words as an answer to fervent prayers, allowing that still small voice to echo in our lives. At times the words spill out into our hearing casually, and a word immerses which grabs our attention and rises above the common conversation. Often in hindsight we realize that the uncommon extraordinary Word of God has been given voice to us in a common ordinary place in our lives. And the words cut to our

core. The unvarnished truth is like a hot coal touching us, or a bucket of icy cold water on our heads, hopefully catching our attention, and hopefully we are listening and respond to the calling of the Word spoken to us.

But it is hard to feel close to a Word. It is hard to feel close to an unseen, ineffable God, invisible, untouchable, so incredible, that this Word lies beyond our comprehension. And that is why disembodied words need flesh on their dry bones. We can leave much to the imagination, but seeing is believing.

It is one thing to read a novel and imagine for yourself about the characters and the setting of the story from the words on a page in a book. It is quite another matter for those words to come to life in a well-scripted movie, which is faithful to the author's intentions. The story leaves the realm of the imagination and comes to life on the screen quite magically if the filmmakers are successful. The words of the story come to life in front of you.

I found this to be true of Internet dating. You can read all about the other person. You can even see their pictures. You can exchange emails for some time. You may even reach the point where you talk on the phone. You wonder, could this be the one?

But all this is somehow not enough to reach the right, truthful and heartfelt conclusion. You have to meet the other person, in the flesh. That makes all the difference. Meeting the other person reveals at once much of what you can know and what is important to know about the other. You can see their sincerity or insincerity in their eyes and body language. If you are a careful observer, the words which come forth from their mouth, match every other cue you can observe. And in person, you can feel whether they are all about themselves or if they

are really interested in knowing you and in having a relationship with you. Seeing and experiencing someone whom you hope will be close to you in the flesh is the clincher.

So it is with humankind and God. Seeing is believing. Experiencing the person of Jesus brings those words of scripture to life.

And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us... These words from John's Gospel speak of the event when the Word of God became a living, breathing human being in the person of Jesus, who lived and walked among us. Now the Word was no longer in our imaginations. This living breathing Word changed everything. This now was a word we could touch, see and hear. The Word taken on flesh gave us a person of God to relate to. And this person helped us realize God loves us, and we have responded, I hope, returning that love in our lives.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [God is one being, and The Incarnate God who walked the earth, is God among us. Emanuel.]...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, ...From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, [Jesus] who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. AMEN