



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our new-born Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Welcome to the 2nd Sunday of Christmas. This year it started in early November, Christmas music on the radio. The closer we got to Christmas the more holiday TV specials filled the TV screen as well. But in all of the hustle and bustle of Christmas, the thing that gets me the most is the song, "The 12 Days of Christmas". Did you ever really think about that song? I know most of you can sing it in your sleep. The 12 days of Christmas are really the days after our celebration of the birth of Jesus on the 25th and goes until Epiphany, which is the 6th of January. And so, I think that it is just fine to keep listening to Christmas music until January 6th. My Sirius radio does not agree with me. So, I have to have Alexa play my favorites to hear the glorious Christmas music for just a bit longer.

Another thing I would like to mention is that I have much anticipation for the new year, 2026. Some of you are still wondering where 2025 went. Sure did seem to fly by, didn't it? But the new year brings us to a NEW start. For me, I can hardly wait. Only 40 days until pitchers and catchers report to spring training. Here's hoping on a better ending to another amazing year for the Brewers.

In our reading this morning from John we have the prologue to the rest of His Gospel. You see the Gospel of John weaves theology, which is how we think about God, and poetry, which most of you might go ick at. It is a prose with the soul of poetry if you will. It is like poetry packing layers of meaning in a word or phrase. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Those words have inspired theologians to write books, musicians to compose music, artists to paint masterworks and all of us to understand Jesus in a profoundly larger way. These 18 verses are crucial in giving us John's insight on themes that run through his gospel.

I, for one, find the synoptic Gospels so much easier to understand. But here is what a commentary I read this week says about all the themes in these 18 verses that begin John's Gospel.

1. The pre-existence of the Word.
2. God/Word and Father/Son as distinctive but yet one.
3. Jesus is God.
4. The struggle between light and darkness.
5. The power of the light over darkness.
6. The relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist.

7. Rejection
8. The miracle of our being able to see God's glory.
9. Jesus as the only Son of God.

The major thing we can take away, is that Jesus is the Word. It is not a word from our dictionary or our vernacular. It is Jesus, the Son of God Incarnate. And then as John goes on to say, He was in the beginning with God and He is God as well. Confusing, see why I love the Gospel of Matthew!!! There is much here to talk about but what it is that God wants to speak to us about in these 18 verses as we begin the New Year? The WORD is my answer. The word that God wants to have with us is quite different to what the boss might mean when he says, "I want to have a word with you." But rather it is a unique Word and God is offering it to us now.

It is Jesus Christ, Son of God from eternity. When John begins this Gospel, he is actually talking about what Christmas is all about. Jesus, the Word, has chosen to become human. WOW! Let us just take a minute to grasp the immensity of that for a moment. No other religion has even had their god in human form. This triune God of ours is very special as Jesus came to live among us in our form. Just think about that.

I read a cute story by Pastor Geherdy, as I was studying that I would like to share. It is not meant as a political comment. But here goes. Imagine that the most powerful and prestigious person in the world, let's say the president of the United States, of his own free will becomes a mouse. A small, furry, insignificant creature, helpless and vulnerable. He chooses to become a mouse because he wants to live among all other mice. He leaves the White House, and the prestige and honor that go with his office. He becomes a mouse in order to help all other mice.

You see, there are mousetraps in kitchens all around the world. There are some in our kitchen right here at CTS and even one in my office. People want to kill every last mouse. And the mousetraps are very inviting. And so, the most powerful man in the world happily becomes a mouse because he loves all mice and wants to do something to save them.

In a similar way, our God plunges His Son Jesus into the arena of human life as He takes on the flesh and bones of our humanity. A more absurd way to look at it is that the Creator of the universe with its countless stars and planets is born in a stable in Bethlehem. We all know the story we just celebrated on Christmas Eve. In fact, we enjoy the story. Remember the days when in our churches there were choirs to sing, a plethora of children to act out the birth in homemade costumes of towels, halos, pillows, staffs. We did anything we could to portray the fact that God became human. He lived on this earth just as we do with all its pain, suffering, tragedies, sin and dying. Jesus came into the thick of daily life, our daily life.

The point of the verse, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." God came so that we would not be alone. He would know what it was like for us to be living in His creation. Even in the agonies of life, we now know that we are not living alone. Jesus is with us when we are depressed and hurting. Jesus is with us when we are hit with bad news. Jesus is with us when we feel guilty and ashamed. Jesus is with us when we are worried about someone we love. Jesus is with us when we are caught in a chain of events that we are powerless to prevent. God did not stray from our troubles, he put himself right in the middle of it all. He truly is Emmanuel, God with us.

Another story today is about a man by the name of John Rosen. It seems to be a good illustration of what it means for God to live among us. John Rosen was a doctor in a psychiatric hospital. Unlike

all the other doctors who were aloof and separate from their patients, he moved into the ward with them. He placed his bed among their beds. He lived the life they must live. Day to day he shared it. He loved them. If they didn't talk, he didn't talk either. It is as if he understood what was happening. He was just there and that communicated something to the patients that they hadn't had in years—somebody understood them. But then he did something else. He put his arms around them and hugged them. This doctor with a string of letters after his name, this highly skilled, highly paid physician, who was like God to the patient, who had control over the lives of his patients, held those unattractive unlovable, sometimes incontinent persons, and loved them back into life. Often, when patients who had been unable to speak said their first words, they were, "thank you".

In plain and simple language, isn't that what God did through Jesus at Christmas? Jesus came and lived in our world. He was part of communities of people with aching bodies, torn and bleeding spirits of heartbreak and loneliness. Christmas tells us God is not aloof and separate from our world. He is in the world with us. He comes to hug us even when sin makes us unattractive. This babe born in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago is God incarnate. He is God in flesh, if you will, God with skin on!

God does have a special word for you. This Word is that this baby came to give His life for us on the cross. He suffered and died for our sins; yours and mine. And it was for this reason that we have Christmas. He came to save us from our sins and death. Matthew 1:21 "She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

This is what makes Christmas so important. Emmanuel, God with us saving us from death and sin. Christmas reminds you that you have a heavenly father who loves you so much that he will "become a mouse", become one of us so He can help us through this life He has graciously given us. It is a new life we refresh each day. or This morning brings us this reminder of the special Word. God became human because of you and just for you. Amen and Merry Christmas!