

**Christmas I**  
**John 1.1-18**  
**By the Rev. Chip Graves**

I believe it's time to rejoice this Christmas season. Our gospel bears something new, a burning light of Christ; a light that was born in and through him. This light shines bright on all things and darkness is overcome. All shadows cease in him. *Let's give him praise.*

But hold on. Not all see the light. Not all choose to recognize the light in Christ, to receive him. This saddens me because not knowing Christ is to not know his love. There is no blame here, no thundering dogma. But to know Christ is to know his bountiful love. And it would be my hope that all would come to know this love, this love we see first hand and in abundance within John's gospel. In essence, Christ's love is like food to those who hunger; like water to those who thirst.

The evangelist describes Christ in terms of a cosmic relationship, one of God to the son, one of Christ-the-Word to the world, a meshing of the eternal presence to the temporal. *Logos* is used. This Greek term figured prominently in early Stoicism as a rational principle of the universe. And Philo, a contemporary philosopher to the Evangelist, regarded logos as a way of speaking about God's creation and its governance. As we continue this reference to Genesis, we recognize this sense of grand planning in the midst of God's word. God literally breathes life into existence within and through Christ.

And as the word was spoken, it became life-creating. In reference to the word becoming flesh, John uses the Greek word, *sarx* meaning flesh, thus placing full humanity with God. God becoming human. This is something new, knowing that God would become human. This becomes the ultimate gift, for God to become a living, breathing Christ. What could be better? What could be a better way to understand God but through the son, the word made flesh. Yahweh has been revealed through Christ; and we have become one with him through Christ. Therefore, let us give him praise.

Now and for the first time, we can truly see the bigger picture. In essence, God's self-expression is Christ. In order to better know and love us, he became one like us. Our creator loved us so much, he became one with us in Christ. Ever play with your child? Ever get down on your knees to play dolls or trucks with your child?" If so, you've entered their world. In this way, you see through God's lens. This playing with your child, this method of loving your child echoes God's call in Christ. .

How do we see the word in today's world? Our world seems so fast-paced, so technologically grounded. There's a plethora of information coming toward us, not in moments but nanoseconds. It's almost too much. And it's not slowing down. And there's power in these words because what we say and hear each day guides our world. These words profoundly affect those around us. And therefore, we beg the question, "in our world, which has the words, the word power? The media. The networks. The broadcasters, The papers. In sum, it's the news. It's CNN, Fox News, CSPAN, ABC,

NBC, NPR and the lot. In many ways they control our world. They control our world by what they say on the radio, in print, and on television. Think there's no power here? Just listen to some of the latest headlines: Terrorists Attack in India, the Stock Market Crashes; Foreclosures/Bankruptcies on the Rise or the US to Be Attacked by Biological Warfare. Scary stuff. When you hear all the bad news it makes you want to run and hide. *But instead, let's give him praise.*

It's all too easy to allow the news to dictate our outlook on life. But there's more to life. And similar to John's prologue, I believe we Christians have been called to en-flesh our Christianity; to place a deeper meaning to our Christendom; to delve deeper into a more mature living-out of Christianity in our every day. It's simply too easy to get caught up in the headlines, too easy to focus on temporal. And at some point we become prey to the daily news. The news becomes our god. We're a deer in the headlight, standing still, not knowing where to turn. We've lost our word in Christ.

Brian McLaren, a prominent author, minister and recognized national speaker indicates there is a new surge among us, a hunger for the Christian word; a new look at ancient Christian practices. He tells us further that the emergent church speaks to this hunger. He passionately shares with his readers that this resurgence in ancient Christian practices allows for a contemporary Christian to reconnect with the past. Contemplative daily prayer is just one of the practices he suggests. In contemplative prayer, he moves us back to an early 6<sup>th</sup> century abbey where life seemed much less complicated; not easy but less complicated. During this time and place, one's life moved in rhythm with daily prayer evoking a sense of spiritual harmony. *Let's give him praise.*

I don't believe McLaren is suggesting we quick-change into tunics, ZZ Top beards and whipping ourselves into religious frenzy. *That was last year's New Year 's Eve party.* However, I do believe that a planned daily prayer life is possible. It's more than possible. It's achievable. Start by planning a brief prayer in the morning as you get up, pondering God in your life; the blessings, the intercessions; and then again at noon, at dinner and before bed. Don't make the prayers too long, you'll fall by the way-side, you'll feel guilty and discontinue this new practice. The benefits to these spiritual God-connect are cosmic and quite real. *Let's give him praise.*

This is but one way to shed light on our darkness, to rediscover our new-born Christ. Let's focus on the joy in Christ, realizing we are so very blessed -- a beautiful history, a beautiful parish, a beautiful community. In fact, if you listen closely you can almost hear those parishioners before us, here in this church from years past -- tens of thousands of stories telling of those who have been here before us in these very pews. Today I ask that you praise God for all in your life. Let's give him praise.  
Amen.