

INTRODUCTION

During Advent, our focus has been on the Legacy of Love, of three different couples: Abraham and Sarah, Ruth and Boaz, Zechariah and Elizabeth. We have seen their and our promise-keeping God, honor God's own steadfast-faithful love in and through each of these couples. Today we see God's love from a new perspective.

Let us give our attention to God's word, in chapter 1 of John's Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.....

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁶Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

(PRAY)

We are accustomed to the narrative accounts of Matthew and Luke's Gospels, who tell the familiar birth narratives: angels, Mary and Joseph, the journey to Bethlehem where there is no room at the inn; a newborn baby in a stable's manger, shepherds, heavenly hosts/angel choirs, and later wisemen arrive and bring gifts. It is the stuff of Christmas pageants, cards and carols, right?

Mark's gospel skips the birth of Jesus altogether, while John's gospel is uniquely different. John begins with the universal--the Cosmic Christ present and active in Creation, 'in the beginning'. From that immensely grand vision, John narrows his focus down to the particular and personal – to "God's one and only Son".

What does John mean by calling Jesus the "logos" or "word"?

A baby who cannot speak, is called "the Word"? What is that about?

Martin Luther (one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation) says that in order for the eternal and infinite God to communicate with us, finite human beings, God speaks to us in "baby talk".

In Greek, the word "logos" is translated "word". Our English word "logic" or "logical" is derived from this same Greek root. In John's context, Logos was in common usage, and it referred to the source of life or integrating principle behind the universe. For Jews of John's day, the logos was the means or vehicle by which the personal, living God communicates with humanity. It is God's way of expressing God's self.* (*Darrell Johnson)

The theological word for this is "incarnation". It means "in-flesh-ness", God with skin on, God wrapped in human flesh, is born into our world as a helpless human infant.

How does one explain the unexplainable?

How does one describe the indescribable?

Others have tried to express this reality:

St. Augustine of the third century wrote: "He it is by whom all things are made, who was made one of all things."

Charles Wesley of the 18th century wrote: "Veiled in flesh the godhead see; Hail the incarnate Diety, pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel."

C.S. Lewis of the 20th century wrote: "In our world too, a stable once had something in it, bigger than the whole world."

A Christmas card is inscribed with this unusual greeting:

"The Word did not become a philosophy to be discussed,

A theory to be debated, a concept to be pondered.

The Word became a Person, to be known and loved."

Truthfully, "*We love because God first loved us.*" (I John 4:19)

John also says: ⁹*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.* ¹⁰*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.* (1 John 4:9-10)

There was no question he loved her. For him it was love at first sight. He was absolutely head over heels in love with her. It was surprising, really, because she was quite ordinary—a commoner of humble origins--and he was the most powerful king to ever rule any kingdom. This king was so powerful, he could have whatever he wanted. Every foreign state trembled before his power; every ambassador respected and feared him.

This king realized that this union would never be approved by his court because of the huge gap in their stations in life. Furthermore, even if she wanted to marry him, he would never know for certain if she truly loved him for who he really was.

She might agree to marry him, not for love, but for the trappings of wealth and power that came with his royal status. How could he know for sure if their love was genuine? The king wrestled alone with his troubled thoughts.

Finally, he made a decision. He must descend, strip himself of his royal power and wealth, and become a commoner. So, the king laid aside all the privileges that were rightly his, in order to become a servant in the household of his beloved. Only then, would he know if she could learn to love him for himself. Indeed, it was his heart's desire to win her love. (adapted by LMC from a story Soren Kierkegaard)

Did she accept or reject him?

Did she return his love from the depths of her heart?

Did they form a deep, genuine, lifelong bond of love?

Do you see where this is going?

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, he says that Jesus, did not consider equality with God something to take advantage of, or to be exploited. Rather, Jesus emptied himself—letting go of all those royal prerogatives.

He did so in order to become like us and take on the form of a servant/slave. The word is the same in Greek. He willingly took on a human body, with all its limitations. The Son chose a life of obedience to the Father.

That great theologian Woody Allen said: "I'm not afraid of dying, I just don't want to be there when it happens." Jesus knew that in assuming a human body, he too would die, as we shall. But Jesus' death was the death of a common criminal—crucifixion.

Why did he do it? Why descend to our level? Why take on human flesh? Why live a life of servanthood and obedience, culminating in an excruciating death on the cross?

Jesus did it all for love—all for love for you. All for love for me.

God so loved you and me, that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

1 John 3:16 (NIV): ¹⁶*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.*

Friends, this is the greatest love story ever told!

This love begins in the heart of God,

Descends to earth as an infant in a manger,

Wraps itself in a servant's towel to wash our feet,

Dies on the cross for our sins, Rises to Resurrection life for our Salvation.

This is the greatest love story of all!!

The only question that remains is this:

Will you receive or reject this Gift of Love?

This is the greatest gift you will ever receive...but in order to receive it you must take a few simple steps. **It's as easy as ABC.**

A--Admit that you are in need of God's love and forgiveness. Admit that you have sinned, missed the mark, fallen short.

B—Believe that God loves you and sent this wonderful gift of love —of Jesus--for you!

C—Confess that belief—"If you Confess with your lips, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

Friends, it really is that simple. God has done everything on our behalf.

He sent the Gift—Prime delivery on Christmas Day! The gift of love wrapped in human flesh. But like any other gift this Christmas, in order to be fully enjoyed it must be received. The gift of God's saving love is just for you—it's got your name on it.

Don't miss out...! (The following quote is from Fr. Pedro Arrupe, a Jesuit priest.)
"Nothing is more practical than falling in love with God in an ultimate way. Who or what you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings , how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. You are God's beloved. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

PRAY