

With his people

The sermon today is based on John 1, our gospel reading for today. I encourage you all to have it out in front of you.

Well, it's happened. Christmas has come. It's a great time of year. The beautiful greenery, lights, and decorations strung in and around the house. Children celebrate the new presents they woke up to yesterday morning. And parents enjoy a well-deserved pause, a breath of fresh air, after all the planning that goes into the big day. But, now that the big day is in the rear view mirror, life will slowly but surely begin to return back to normal. Even though we might leave our lights and decorations out for a while

Don't get me wrong, Christmas is a great time of year. It's awesome, and can be a lot of fun. But sometimes, Christmas brings out some problems. Under all the merry and the holly, was everything perfect this Christmas? Or well, was there something out of place? Maybe it was something minor, like an odd present that you plan to return once the extended family leaves. Or, maybe it was something a more. Maybe there was a place in your home left empty, a chair that should've been filled by a loved one. For whatever reason, they weren't there. Maybe because they live somewhere else, or worse, there's some bad blood. This gulf of separation can quickly form between two people who care for each other.

And just like there might be distance between us and our people, the people in our lives we care about, there is that same gulf of separation between us and God. A good look at our world today makes heaven feel far away. Sin attacks the whole world around us. Corruption in our world today seems to get worse and worse. And, sin attacks us on a personal level too, actively separating us from God. Looking at the world

around us, it can be hard to see if there is a loving, all powerful God at work. This gulf of separation is sin, and the separation us and perfection is vast. We simply don't measure up. We simply can't cross that gulf of separation between us and God.

But God can. God is with his people. Our loving God is with us, with us in all of our sin, all of our weaknesses, and all of our imperfections. This is what our text is all about today, how God is with his people. In fact, he has been since the beginning. John verses 1-2 state that, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that that was made." The Word, the title John gives to the second person of the Trinity. The Son of God, Jesus. The Word has been with his people, with his whole creation since the very beginning of our existence. He cares deeply for you all, he's created, crafted a perfect place in his creation for you. From the clothes on your back, to the very air you breathe.

And the Word didn't just sit across this gulf of separation, dwelling in perfection, and wait for us, his people, to measure up. Verse 14 says "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." I want to talk a little bit more about this word, dwelt. It's used in another place in the Bible. In the Old Testament when the Israelites were wandering in the desert after their Exodus from Egypt, God had a dwelling place with his people, the tabernacle. Now, this tabernacle wasn't designed to be a permanent place, a permanent location. It wasn't a building with four walls and a roof. It was a tent. God moved with his people. No matter where they went, their God, the one true God, went with them. God and his people are inseparable. Even when his people complained to him. Even when they sinned. Even when his people did not measure up to perfection. God's dwelling place is not across some gulf of separation. God's dwelling is always on the move with

his people. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. In fact, if you look at the original language, you could say, the word became flesh and “tabernacled” among us.

And this is exactly what happened on Christmas. And why we celebrate this holiday with so much fervor. It embodies this promise, this free gift: God’s with his people. No matter what. It’s a greater present than anything under the Christmas tree. Just like in the Old Testament, where God tabernacled with his people, Jesus came and tabernacled with his people too. Jesus moved with his people. That he willingly crossed this gulf of separation to come and be with his own. John says in verse 11 that, “He came into his own, and his people did not receive him.” He came into this world, even though he wasn’t treated as a king, but as a castaway, all starting with being born into a manger in some backwater farm town. And yet, he still came and still dwelt with his people. He came and experienced all our sins, all of our flaws and all of our weaknesses.

And he is still with his people today. In John chapter 14, Jesus promises to be with his people, “Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me...And in that day, you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.” Jesus is in us. Even still today although we do not see our God in the flesh, he dwells, he tabernacles, in the hearts of his people. As his people move around this world, no matter where we go, no matter what we do, Jesus moves with us. That’s the promise we celebrate every Christmas. There is no gulf of separation between us and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus came and tabernacled with his people on earth, he now tabernacles in our hearts, the hearts of his people.

Now, there's a phrase I've used throughout this sermon today, "his people." Who exactly are his people? God's people are everyone who believes in him. Verse 12 says that, "to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gives the right to become the Children of God." All of you here today decided to come to church after one the busiest holidays of the year. Many of you are getting God's Word twice this week. You are absolutely his people. But, I'd encourage you to think this after you leave here today. God's people, his people, are all people who believe in him. Not just the ones who show up for church on Sunday. More than this, Jesus is Lord of all creation. He cares deeply about all people. The people that might not have been at your Christmas day celebration. He cares about that empty chair. Don't be afraid to cross that gulf of separation between you and his people around you. Because, we have Jesus dwelling, tabernacling, in us wherever we choose to go. That same Word who spoke creation into being, who came and healed the sick, the lame, and the blind, and raised the dead. He is stronger, far stronger, than all the sin, all the corruption, and every gulf of separation that our fallen world has to offer. Jesus, even now, moves with his people, bringing us to a proper relationship with God our Father, and with one another. May he continue to dwell in our hearts, bridging the gulfs of separation, tabernacling with his people. Amen.