

John 1:1-18 “The Word Became Flesh”
1/3/2021 Second Sunday of Christmas
Pastoral Intern Michael Onstad

John 1:1-18 (NKJV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not [a]comprehend it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the [e]right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ”

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

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

18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

The Word Became Flesh

When was the last time you remember seeing or hearing something happen that left you awestruck, or dumbstruck? When you’re at a complete loss for words. Perhaps you heard a story of someone miraculously recovering from a disease or accident, as there are certainly a host of those. For me, though, (and this is going to sound kind of lame compared to medical miracles) I

think the last time that happened was a few years ago when the famous “Minneapolis Miracle” happened. Every Vikings fan knows what I’m talking about, and I vividly remember where I was at when it happened. I was down in the men’s dorm lounge at FLBC (it was still AFLBS then) watching the Vikings playoff game against the New Orleans Saints. The Vikings had a very good year, riding a miracle season from quarterback Case Keenum. They took control of the game early, but allowed New Orleans to come back, and they were down by 1 with 10 seconds left. They were all the way back on their own 40 yard line, so they really needed a miracle, Hail Mary type play. Case Keenum drops back to pass, throws it to Stefon Diggs, who leaps up and catches it close to the sideline. “Yes!” I think, “get out of bounds!” everyone else yelled as he caught it. But then the New Orleans defender misses the tackle, and Diggs has nothing but daylight in front of him. He runs into the endzone and scores the game-winning touchdown, and the rest is history. We’re all freaking out in the dorm, yelling and hugging and jumping up and down, utterly shocked by what just happened. Now, as fun as the Minneapolis Miracle was, a much, MUCH bigger, and more awe-inspiring miracle happened a long, long time ago. John records it for us in today’s text, and to this day, still makes me pause in amazement, and always leaves me a little dumbstruck. The miracle is this: **Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word of God, came down from heaven and took on flesh in order to save us.**

John tells us in today’s Gospel lesson that Jesus is the Eternal Word of God, that the Eternal Word became flesh for us, and, most importantly, that Jesus the Eternal Word has redeemed us!

So to begin, Jesus is the Eternal Word of God. Ok, we need to break that down because that probably sounds a little heady, so bear with me.

Here at the beginning of our Gospel lesson, John is taking us back to the beginning, to Genesis, with these first 3 verses. In the beginning, God spoke the universe into existence with His Word. Genesis 1 tells us that God said “let there be...and there was...” God created light, the heavens, the seas, earth, everything, all by His words. That formula of “and God said...and there was” is the creation account.

So we see that God’s primary activity is speaking. He creates by speaking, and He reveals His actions through speaking. His main mode of action is speaking. Further, when we read verses 1 and 3 together, we see that this Eternal Word was the agent of creation. He was the Word that God used to create the world. Later, in verse 14 especially, John tells us that this Word is Jesus.

But what does that mean? What does it mean that Jesus is the Word of God, the Word through which God created the world? Well, I can’t tell you the intricate details of how Jesus was the agent of God’s creation, but I can tell you that Jesus being the Eternal Word of God means that everything that God has to say to us is found in Jesus. God’s character, God’s attitude toward us, God’s will, God’s very presence, is expressed to us fully and ultimately in Jesus.

Jesus, the Eternal Word, was there in the beginning with God. He even *is* God. He is the perfect expression of all that God is. There is now no need to look for God anywhere but in

Jesus. You don't need to look to mystical signs, special revelations, whatever. In Jesus Christ you will find the full divinity and glory of God, and also the full humanity of man. You will find the Son, the Second person of the Trinity, with all of the glory of the Father in Him as He is the true and only Son of the Father, the first person of the Trinity.

Up to this point in history, no one had ever seen God. God had spoken throughout the Old Testament to His people, to be sure, but no one had ever truly seen God's face or God in all His glory. But, as John says in verses 14, in Jesus, they saw the glory of the Word, the glory as of the only Son of the Father. So when anyone looks at Jesus, they're looking at God as well. Because again, Jesus Christ is the perfect expression and revelation of God and all that He is.

But also when you look at Jesus, you will see a man, a human being. When the shepherds came at Christmas, they found a helpless little baby boy. But, that was even more significant than finding a mighty, conquering, divine warrior. Why, you ask? Well that leads us to our next point.

The Eternal Word became flesh for us.

John 1:14 is the one of the most Earth-shattering, history-changing verses ever penned. This Eternal Word, who was with God at the beginning, is God Himself, and is the agent of God's creation, *becomes flesh*. This is no small thing, friends. This is a HUGE deal. In verse 14, we read that the agent of creation became a part of His creation. He didn't change into flesh and thus ceased to be divine. No, the divine took on flesh, and lived and dwelt among us.

That is the miracle of the incarnation that we celebrate at Christmas. God Himself has not left His creation to die, but has come down and taken on the form of His creation. And He did it intentionally. This was the plan of God from all the way back in Genesis 3 after the fall when He promised to Eve that her offspring would crush the head of the serpent.

The apostle Paul explains this well in his famous Christ hymn in Philippians 2, one of my absolute favorite passages of Scripture. He says that though Christ was in the form of God, he did not count that equality with God as something to be grasped, but instead made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, being found in human form. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word of God, in all his divinity, then becomes human. He takes on flesh, and all of the weakness and frailty that that entails.

I mean, what? Wouldn't you, if you had all the power of God, want to keep that and use it all the time? You could do whatever you want! Your only limit would be your imagination!

But see, that's the difference between us and Jesus. Remember I said earlier that Jesus is the perfect expression of God's will, character, etc.? Notice that Jesus never uses his divine power to do whatever the heck He wants, like you and I would do.

Because we are selfish and sinful by nature, but God is not. He takes on the form of servant. The perfect revelation and expression of God takes on the form of a servant. Again, what? Why did God do this? Why, in all His power, did He come in the form of a servant? Because that is His character. Christ, the Eternal Word of God, became flesh because of His great love for His creation, and His desire to redeem and save it.

Jesus, the Eternal Word, has redeemed us!

The miracle of the incarnation, in all its mind-blowing and logic-defying greatness, was for us. It was for our salvation, our redemption. It was all out of God's desire to be with His creation.

One of the first bits of Pastor Haugen's teaching I'll never forget in my first year of seminary was when he spent some time on the word "dwelt" in verse 14. The original word there can carry the sense of making a tent, or even "tabernacling". Now that's significant to note because in the Old Testament, God dwelt with His people in the tabernacle, in the temple. He had specific places where He would be, and you could only get to those places via sacrifice. But now, in Christ, He dwells among us. The divine took on flesh in order to dwell with, to "tabernacle" with, His people once more, and for eternity.

However, we'll note that not everyone believed this mind-blowing reality. Going back a few verses to verse 11, John says that even though Christ the Eternal Word came to his own people, Israel, they did not receive him. These people had spent CENTURIES waiting for their Messiah, and when he showed up, they rejected him. They thought they were going to get a conquering king that would kick the Romans out and usher in the days of King David again. And because they didn't get that, they rejected Jesus. There were many who rejected him because of His claims and teachings, as well. The Pharisees and other religious leaders of Jesus' day accused Him of blasphemy on more than one occasion.

And so it continues today. People reject Jesus for a variety of ways. And if we're not careful, Christians, we will too. By nature, without faith, we are turned in ourselves and want nothing to do with God. Even as Christians, we have this sinful nature that tempts us and drives us to commit sin, both inwardly in our hearts, and outwardly towards our neighbors. We are inherently selfish, and aren't always great at looking out for our neighbors

However, that was the reason the Word became flesh. Because of our sin and subsequent separation from God, God came to us, took on our form, our humanity, in order to redeem us.

Verse 12 says that all who received Jesus, all who believed in his name, are given the right to become children of God. You don't become a child of God by striving for it. You don't become a child of God by cleaning up your act and doing all these good works in expectation of a reward for them. Verse 13 says the children of God are born of God, not of blood or any sort of work or will on our part.

That is why this verse is included in the declaration of grace, the absolution. God works through that promise to make you a child of God by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, the Eternal Word, for your sins. He creates faith in you through the speaking and hearing and receiving of the Gospel.

And that was exactly why the divine took on flesh. He wanted us, He wanted you, to be restored to a right relationship with Himself once again, so that creation and Creator may dwell together once again for eternity. No longer are continual sacrifices needed to enter into the tabernacle to receive forgiveness of sins. The curtain has been torn, and God now dwells directly

with His people in Jesus, giving them direct forgiveness of sins through the words of Christ, the words of the Gospel.

And that Word comes to you today as well, friends. The Word made flesh comes to you through the preaching and reading of the Scriptures, the Word of God. And this morning especially, He comes to you in the flesh in Communion, delivering to you what he won for you on the cross.

So repent and receive him! Receive him by faith, and you will become a child of God. Your sins will be forgiven, and you will be promised a place in heaven, where one day, when Christ returns, we will dwell bodily with Him and with all the saints forever. For just as Christ bodily rose and ascended to heaven, so too will we when he returns.

So to conclude, Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word of God, the agent through which God created the world, and who was there in the beginning with God. That Eternal Word then entered into history and took on flesh for us. Why did he do that? He did it in order to redeem us, to save us from our sin and alienation from God.

Jesus the Eternal Word came down and took on flesh in order to save us.

That is the miracle that trumps all miracles. It's greater than the Minneapolis Miracle, greater than miraculous surgeries, greater than any shocking moment throughout history. In the incarnation, when God took on human flesh, we find the greatest miracle in history. And it was all for us and for our salvation. Amen.