

Sa.

I knocked on the door and the dog went crazy. And she said, come in. So I came in. She said, now listen, you got to do exactly what I say, okay? She said, stand up against that wall, okay?

She said, to your left there's a bowl that has some dog food in it. Take one piece of dog food and put it on the floor and then back up. I will release the dog. He will come over, eat the dog food and sniff you. And then he will return to me.

And then you can come and sit by me.

Anybody seen the Seinfeld episode, the Soup Nazi? Okay. Kind of remind me of that. No soup for you. But anyway, the people online are just cracking up.

I could, I can tell. I can hear them over, over the airways. Okay, well during that visit, Louise told me about a book that I've heard of from time to time. It was written in 1954. 5.

I've heard about it over the years. It's called Hinds Feet on High Places. I think we have a picture of it. There it is and it's an allegory. And a hind is again like a deer, like mountain goat type creature.

Hinds feet on high places tell the story. Tells the story of a young woman. Her name is Much Afraid. Okay, Much Afraid. Much Afraid.

This woman is deformed and disfigured in lots of ways and she just longs to escape the valley of humiliation where she lives. She wants to follow the shepherd, which is a Jesus figure. She wants to follow him to high places where peace and joy and freedom await. But the journey is so difficult, it's so demanding and challenging, it's unfamiliar. So the shepherd gives Much Afraid two traveling companions.

And their names are Suffering and Sorrow. And they are to walk with her. With them, Much Afraid climbs these steep paths and learns to trust the shepherd even when she can't seem. And over time, through the companionship of sorrow and suffering, the shepherd transforms Much Afraid's fears. He heals her wounds and he gives her sure footed hinds feet needed to walk on the high places, the places of peace, joy and freedom.

It's an allegory of the Christian life. And the journey that we're on is one often through struggles and guided by the shepherd's love, we are led to a place where fear is replaced with joy and weakness becomes strength. As we learn to see the value of our companions. Sorrow and suffering, they're a means of growth actually. Well Louise

loved that book.

At one point she said, I used to think it was kind of stupid, but she said, I absolutely love it now. I read it all the time. She loved it because she saw herself in it. So Louise, like much afraid, walked a hard road. It was a road that was marked by loss, similar to the road maybe we're on today.

A road that was marked by cancer, by fear, insecurity and uncertainty. But Louise knew that she walked it not alone, but she walked it with the shepherd. And like the story, Louise's journey did not end in the valley of humiliation. Suffering and sorrow led her into the high place where the shepherd makes all things new. And so, when I think about that, you would agree God doesn't always remove the difficult path, but he promises to walk it with us and to transform us along the way.

And he uses a couple of companions called sorrow and suffering to help us grow closer to Him. So today we begin a series of sermons called He Became. It's a great time of the year to think about God entering our world, to become like us, to become one of us, not with power, but with humility and love. He came to meet us where we are in order to lead us where he is. And he journeys with us throughout it.

All our text today, our main text is John, chapter 11 5, and then verse 14.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him, nothing that has been made was made.

In him was life. And that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Then he talks a little bit about some other things, including John the Baptist. And then he comes back to this idea of the Word.

And he says, the 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. Now, if you've read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you'll note that Matthew, Mark and Luke are considerably different than John, Matthew, Mark and Luke are sometimes called the Synoptic Gospels. Meaning literally the word Synoptic means seeing together or viewing together. And so you'll Notice that those three have much in common.

For example, 90 to 95% of Mark's gospel is found in Matthew. It seems like by the inspiration of spirit, Mark wrote first. A lot of people say Peter told him the stories, Mark wrote them down. Matthew comes along for a different audience and infuses Mark's Gospel with big sections of teachings of Jesus. And then Luke says, he says in his

opening Hey, I, I've looked at what other people said and what they've written, and I too want to write an orderly account for you, Theophilus.

So again, by the inspiration of spirit, we believe those guys all wrote, we think they wrote in the 60s before the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem. Well, John is really different. We believe that John wrote maybe 30 years later after the temple is destroyed, the church has changed a lot. He's living in Ephesus. The center of Christianity has moved from Jerusalem area over to western Turkey.

And so it's a different time. And it seems like the church has changed a little bit. There's more Greek influence, more Greek culture that's coming to bear upon the church. And so John is writing into that context and he tells a different story. He doesn't tell a difference or he takes a different approach to telling a story of Jesus.

And he makes it abundantly clear. This is what I like about it. He says, listen, I'm going to tell you exactly why I'm writing, and I'm writing with restraint. And so he says, this is kind of funny, really. He says, Jesus did many other things as well.

You know, if I wrote them all down, the whole world couldn't contain the books. Do we have that on screen? Should have it.

Okay. So he says, Jesus did a whole bunch of things I can't even write down. And then he says, Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But here he says, this is something really I like. He says, but I've written these things with a real distinct purpose.

I've written these so that you may come to believe that Jesus is, is the Messiah and he is the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. He says, listen, I, I make it really clear why I'm writing. And so when someone comes to me and says, I, I'm not sure about the Jesus saying, I, I'm, I'm seeking, I'm trying to find out. I say, well, okay, here's your assignment. I want you to read the Gospel of John a few times and then we'll talk about it.

Read the Gospel of John because John is designed to bring people to faith. And then it's also, I believe, designed to sustain, feign that faith as we walk through the valley of humiliation and move toward the high place. If you read John's Gospel, you'll notice that there is nothing about the birth of Jesus. There are no shepherds, there are no angels, there's no manger seen Jesus. Or John goes way, way farther, a lot deeper.

He goes back to the. He goes back to eternity. And he's doing this, I believe, because of cultural challenges. Some people were saying, Jesus is not really God. Others saying, well, Jesus not really a man

either.

Others saying, Jesus not really real. And so John just said, I'm going to take all that on right now. And so he does. And he says, in the beginning, echoing Genesis 1. In the beginning.

In Genesis 1 says, in the beginning, God created heavens and the earth. And so John is saying, let me tell you who that Creator is. And so he says, in the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

And through him all things were made. Nothing's been made that he didn't make. And so trying to make this simple, Jesus, or John is saying, this Word is God. This Word created the world. This Word became flesh.

He's talking about Jesus, and he uses the Greek word logos. You've probably heard this thrown around quite a bit in the English language, logos. And it's. It's a very powerful word that has a lot of different ideas associated with it. And I think John, by inspiration, is using it on purpose.

He's taking people who use that word for different things. And he's saying, let me tell you what it's all about, really. And he brings it and says, it's about Jesus. It's about Jesus. And so he says this Jesus.

Jesus is eternal God. We understand. We don't understand the mystery of the Trinity fully, but we. We know that that's a concept. And so he's saying, Father, Son, and Spirit, Jesus the Son is fully eternal God.

And then he's saying something that's surprising to me because I wasn't really raised with this concept. He's saying that Jesus the Word is the creator of the world. And so he says it here. Paul says it in Colossians 1:16. And the writer of Hebrews says, In Hebrews chapter one, verse two, Jesus is the creator.

So Jesus is the Word. Jesus is the creator. Jesus is almighty God. And he becomes flesh. He becomes fully human.

He became one of us. And Paul talks about this in Philippians 2. He says, though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he emptied himself, or he gave up his divine privileges. He took on the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

So John says, Jesus, the Word became flesh. He became human. He made his dwelling among us. And that's another really interesting thing. To me, the Greek, it says, he basically, literally pitched his tent with

us.

He tabernacled. If you know a little bit of the Old Testament, the tabernacle is back in Exodus, where the people are wandering in the valley of humiliation in the desert. And God says, listen, I will meet you. Make a tent, and I will meet you at that tent. It's called the tabernacle.

And so John is saying, Jesus Christ tabernacles with us. He. He moves into our neighborhood. He dwells with us. He, He.

He meets us. And that's what it's all about. It's about meeting us, God's presence. And by the way, the old tabernacle in the Exodus story becomes a prototype for the temple that Solomon builds in Jerusalem. It's about God's presence.

So John is saying that Jesus, fully God, fully human, lives among us. He moved in our neighborhood, as Eugene Peterson says. And. And I think the question is, well, why would he do that?

Why would. Why would you give up all that to do this? Why would you walk in the valley of humiliation with us? Well, I've got three reasons I can think of, and there are probably a lot more, but three things I can think of revealed in Scripture. Number one, he became human to show us what God has always wanted in human life.

So in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is saying, look, I didn't come to abolish the law and the prophets. I didn't come to destroy the Old Testament. I came to fulfill them. Essentially saying, if you ever wanted to know what a human being is supposed to look like, I am that I have embodied Scripture. He is the Word in the flesh.

He is Scripture with skin on. He shows us what humanity was meant to be. Fully trusting God, fully obedient, fully aligned with the Father's will, and full of love for all people. If you ever wonder what God wants from you or what he wants from me is, look at Jesus. Because he is the perfection of the embodiment of what God has said in His Word.

The second reason is he came, he became human to save us and break us from the power of death. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews says. Because God's children are human beings made of flesh and blood. The Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die.

And only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. And then he continues, therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and

faithful high priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering, testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

So there's a lot there. But just quickly, he's saying, Jesus died. Jesus takes a punishment that should be ours. He takes my place, paying the price for my sins. And because Jesus died and then rose again, showing that there is life after death, we don't need to fear death.

We don't need to fear it. He shared in our humanity so that we could. So that he could destroy the one who owns the power of death and free us from our fears. So he came, he became like us, to represent us, to rescue us, and to help us in our time. I mean, he knows.

He knows sorrow and suffering. He knows them very well because he journeyed with them through the valley of humiliation that leads to the high place. He understands then the third reason is he became human to give us confidence to approach God again. From the writer of Hebrews, he says, Jesus understands our weaknesses, for he faced all the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God.

There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it the most. So Jesus pitches his tent with us to help us. He understands our weakness. He understands our pain. He understands our grief.

He understands betrayal. He understands hunger. He understands loneliness, fatigue, fear. He understands death. We can approach God boldly with confidence, Confidence that he hears our prayers.

Confidence that he understands them. Confidence that he cares about us. He will walk with us. When I think about Louise, she's such a sweet lady. When I think about her, I think about much afraid.

Life is a journey, and it is often beautiful and amazing and wonderful. But sometimes, sometimes it's not. Sometimes it's painful and it's difficult. The shepherd meets us where we are and says, I will walk with you, and you can be where I am. I will help you along the way.

We don't walk alone. And sometimes it's surprising in some ways that the shepherd says, listen, you may not see me for a little while, but I'm going to give you a couple of companions, sorrow and suffering. And really underneath them is joy and peace. And he said, I'm going to give you these two companions to walk with you. They seem like undesirable companions, but the shepherd knows them really well because he had them when he was here.

And he knows their importance. He knows their value in helping us along on the journey. You know, the Bible tells us that God didn't love us from a distance. He came near. He became.

He became one of us. He became like us so that we can become like him. He didn't avoid our pain. He entered into it fully. God became flesh.

He pitched his tent in our valley of humiliation. He walks our roads. He shows the path to the high places. It's a long and winding road, but he promises his presence all along the way. So Rick Warren says you're either, to use valley language, you're either in the valley, coming out of the valley or going back into the valley.

Because that's the way life is. And so whatever valley you're in or going to be in or have been in, whatever you're walking today, whether it be grief, maybe it's uncertainty, maybe it's insecurity, maybe it's fear, maybe it's shame, maybe it's just this longing for things to be better and different. Hear this. You're not alone. You're not alone.

The Word became flesh. God with us, Emmanuel. God for us. God who understands us. And someday, like Louise, like much afraid, we will stand on the high places with hinds feet sure, steady, whole and secure.

Because the shepherd who became human will finish what he started in you and in me. As we come to communion, everything we talked about today comes into focus. The Word who was in the beginning, the Creator who spoke galaxies into existence. The shepherd who walks beside us in the valley of humiliation. He became human.

He became flesh and blood so that he could give that flesh and blood for us. On the night before the cross, Jesus took some bread and he broke. And he says, this is my body given for you. Not just shown to you. Not just live beside you, but given, given for you.

The Creator took on a body so he could offer it in our place. Then he took the cup and said, this is my blood of the new covenant. The blood of the one who shared in our humanity, who tasted our sorrow, who walked on the road that we walk all the way to death, and then walked out of the grave so that we could follow him to high places. Communion is a reminder that the shepherd didn't say simply tell much afraid or Louise or you or me to keep going. He went first.

He went lower than we could go. He descended deeper in the valley than we could ever descend. And then he rose higher and higher than we could ever climb. On our own. So as we take the bread and take the cup, remember this.

He knows your sorrow, he knows your suffering. He knows the steep

places of the dark places and he walks with you in all of it. Jesus the shepherd became human. He invites you to his table not because you have walked perfectly, but because he has. He invites you to come boldly to receive mercy and grace in your time of need.

So let's pray as we eat and drink. Father, thank you for this time of reflection and remembrance of the shepherd who has walked our roads and continues to walk with us. Sometimes he leaves us with the companions of sorrow and suffering and we know that he knows all about those. And so as we take this bread, take this cup, thank you for it. In Jesus name, Amen.

Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know you can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel. Visit [YouTube.com sherwoodoaks](https://www.youtube.com/sherwoodoaks) to watch messages, series and complete worship services.