

John 1: 1-5, 10-14

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

### Trinity Presbyterian Church Christmas Day

---

#### “God is in the Rubble”

“...and the Word became flesh and lived among us.”

**Intro:** If God could give you anything for Christmas, what would you want? Maybe a better job or more life purpose? Maybe better health or at least to be feel a few years younger? Perhaps we go big. Asking God for world peace or to eradicate hunger? We come to the manger on Christmas morning finding God has given us an odd gift: A child. Gift-wrapped in swaddling clothe, sound asleep in a feeding trough. What are we to make of the miracle God gives us on Christmas morning?

**Move 1:** Start by peeking into the creche. There he is: God in the flesh. The savior of the world sleeping soundly. The Creator of the universe becoming created, developed in a human womb and birthed into the world. It is an amazing sight! But stare long enough and see the normality of it. The baby begins to stir. Then he lets out a piercing wail into the night—baby is hungry. Then as he's gulping down his mother's milk, he begins to squirm making one of those contorted baby faces as he grunts. Of course, then Papa Joseph sniffs the air asking Mary, “Was that one of the donkeys or the baby?” After watching the scene for a bit it begins to occur to us what we are observing isn't quite as special as we might have expected. Instead it's normal. The God-child is needy. Helpless. Even spits up like every other baby. Relying on the graces of new parents who fumble around trying to figure things out as they go. We peer into the manger on Christmas morning and we are surprised: it seems all-too-ordinary. God in the flesh as a needy, helpless baby.

**Move 2:** It is then a sobering reality settles in. The child is cute, but he is not the God we really want. After the sentimentality of the nativity scene gets stored back in the box, we desire a powerful savior who can save our world. We need a God who can take care of our on the ground problems. Just the other day a friend on Facebook made the plea for her father who is sick and

suffering. After months, the doctors can't find any answers. "Please pray for a Christmas miracle," she says. We who hang around churches understand where she is coming from. We pray for a savior who can save our loved one from the misery of another round of chemo. A savior who can snap his fingers putting our relationships back together, or who can cure our low self-esteem, or at least help us pay our bills. Or maybe our need has nothing to do with us. Just help the starving orphans in Africa, we pray. Or save the refugees who are fleeing for their family's lives! Every week we name prayers with deep longing for a savior to swoop in and do something—the quicker, the better. We need a god who gifts the world with Christmas miracles. But the god we want is not the God we end up getting.

**Move 3:** Instead the Word becomes flesh to be with us. To live among us. To take up residence inside of our experiences. Not just the highlights either, but the low moments as well. You see, "being with" is what love does. Love is not interested in coercion or domination. Love does not dominate the darkness, but brings its light into it. Love does not demand we earn it by making the moral climb up to God, it comes down to us--especially in the lowest places. If we looked at a blueprint of a 1st century Palestinian home we would see that the manger is located in the basement rather than the outdoor barn. The basement being the lowest level of the house. The basement where it is so dark our kiddos don't go down there alone without getting spooked. God is born in the basement; the lowest, darkest places in our world. There's God, alongside the dirty faced workers who are slave laborers in the sweat shops. There's God, sitting with the teenager who is contemplating suicide. There's God, holding the children in Aleppo who are buried in the rubble. God is in the rubble with them and God is in the rubble with us. Love is the word that becomes flesh on Christmas morning. To live among us. To camp out with us in our basement places. To be with those who are buried in the rubble.

**Move 4:** Now can we get a sense of the Christmas miracle? The same light given by God is received into the world by God's children. God's gift shines through us! Some of us are called to be present with people who are struggling with a darkness inside of them. Some are called to bring peace to violent places. Others are called to offer simple reminders that no one is alone in the world. Like Carl Baker does when he drives the elderly to their doctor's appointments. Or like Dick Patterson used to do when he'd work every Christmas to be a small light for children with cancer as they would unwrap presents in their hospital beds. Or like Beth Harper does when she sits with clients who see no way out of despair. You see, all of us are like tiny light bulbs. Light bulbs which by themselves don't do much. But when we get plugged into the source, we radiate God's light. Of course, not all of our wattage is the same. At church sometimes we string our lights together. Like our children did last week when they made Christmas cards for our shut-ins—sharing their light with our friends whose glow has faded over time. Like our mission committee did when they blessed two immigrant families with Christmas gifts who are living in fear of the dark times ahead. We have received God's gift to be the light in the darkness everywhere we go. It is the miracle of Christmas. God's light of the world shared by God's children.

**Conclusion:** Look, the savior we find in the manger is a God who is with us. Most days we want God to be more. But perhaps to "be with" is all love is truly capable of. And perhaps, somehow, the miracle we receive on Christmas morning is enough. Merry Christmas.