

Christmas 1
 December 27, 2015
 Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's, San Jose, Ca
 Isaiah 61:10-62:3
 Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7
 John 1:1-18

The prologue of John's Gospel starts with the words "in the beginning was the Word" – Gen 1 starts, "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep." John does not spend time on the nativity of Jesus. He takes us back to Jesus' existence before time, to his divine existence.

John makes the connection of Jesus as Word / Logos. Word / Logos: Gen 1:3 (read); God spoke at creation, it was done; God spoke the Law to Moses; God's Word was in the mouths of the prophets.

The Message: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish."

For Jesus to be the Word of God expresses that we can think of him as God's most essential communication to us. Before there were other means, such as the words of prophets, or appearances of God's power; now the physical dwelling of Jesus / the Word among us communicates God's nature perfectly.

John stated the purpose he was to serve– to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ, the *christos*; and that by believing in him we have life in his name. The church has us reading this text in the context of Christmas; to state the difference that Jesus' birth makes in the life of the world.

So how does any of this affect you and me?

The God you and I worship as the source of creation, love, hope, light, righteousness, justice, and peace; that same God chose 2,015 years ago to come to us as a human, and to feel friendship, fear, pain, rejection, love, healing, friendship, and death. When we loose someone we love, God remembers Lazarus. When a family member hurts our feelings or turns against us, God remembers Judas. When we pray our children or friends through an illness, God remembers the excitement when the lame were made to walk, and the blind were made to see. When we are depressed, God remembers the Garden of Gethsemane. When we are happy, God remembers talking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Knowing the stories of Jesus' life help you and me to learn how Jesus thought, and how Jesus reacted to life's situations. Through what we learn from Jesus, we know about the heart of God. This guides me in who of the Trinity to pray to.

God certainly could have chosen another way to convey His will, to convey His frustrations with our failings, to show us what He expects us to do with the gift of our own life. But Christmas morning is the ultimate expression of God's rule under free will. Our spiritual mentor came to us in the form of a vulnerable baby. God's nudging, guiding presence always gives us the right to refuse or ignore. John said that "Jesus came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God".

You and I have decisions placed on our path every day. In marriage encounter we learn that even to love is a decision to be made-every day. From John we learn that it is also a decision whether to believe that Jesus is the essence of God's character; and whether to live according to the belief that we are participating in a new relationship with God;

or we can decide to not accept and believe; to reject that there is light that can flush out the darkness in our life; to reject the offer for new life.

We meet in this worship hall because we believe – or at least we want to believe, that Jesus really is the Word, the Logos, Light, and Life.

Through our decision to believe in Jesus as God the Son, Paul tells us what advantage we gain. Through our belief we give up feeling held captive to the Law that God gave to Moses, and we are adopted by God. As God's children, we are heirs, inheriting all the grace that God has to give.

On the hope of that promise we continue the celebration of Christmas morning this Sunday and next Sunday; and by the grace of God, we will choose to celebrate this incarnation of the Word of God every day of our lives. Knowing the fullness of John's claim that Jesus is the Word, the logos, we appreciate the choice of words in *The Message*, that through Jesus' birth, "the Word has moved into our neighborhood".

Please join me in prayer. Lord God, through your Son Jesus Christ, we learn about your limitless love for us, and your desire for us to become your children, in faith. We are thankful for Jesus' earthly life, guiding us beyond the belief of a God of laws and judgment, into a relationship with you that is filled with light, life, love, and grace. Amen.