

The King Dwells with us
John 1:1-18

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the Word of God this day. Amen.

In a kingdom far, far away there lived a young king, This king had vast estates. He had castles and riches, gold, silver, jewels – big ones, little ones, as many as he could ever want. His kingdom's lands were vast with the best resources, farms, orchards and vineyards. He had dukes and governors, soldiers and craftsman, cooks and farmers, shepherds and doctors, servants of every kind and type all working in various businesses and occupations throughout his vast kingdom. But the King was lonely. One day as he passed through one of his kingdom's villages and he spotted this beautiful young woman, who teaching and caring for young children. He stopped his carriage down the road a bit and got out to watch her from a distance. As he watched her he noticed the care and her face lit up in a smile she worked with the children that were all around her. He asked secretly about her and was told that she is very generous, that she loved life, that she had a great caring attitude towards everyone, basically people said that there never ever was a better person in all the land. The king was smitten by all he heard and by what he had seen and so he desired to win her as his bride.

He immediately called for his jewelry makers, telling them his desire to cover her in the very finest jewels, ornate necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, custom made with the finest jewels. He called for his stone masons and carpenters and designers and told them to build the largest castle with the finest marble and rarest woods. He sent his servants to seek out the warmest rungs, deep rich carpets, beautiful furniture, and finest furnishings of all kinds. However, as he made these plans the young king stopped and thought, that if he gave her all these rich and beautiful things he would never know if she loved him or loved the riches he showered on her. So he scratched all these plans and tried to think how else he could win her hand in marriage.

He decided that he would return to her village and call upon her in person. He called for his finest tailor to make a suit of gold and silver thread, he wanted to look his best. He called in the hairstylist and the manicurist. He got the servants to polish his sword and scepter and crown. The stable hands made ready to travel, shining up the king's largest most magnificent carriage and hitched up the perfect team of eight white horses. The trumpeters, the marching band, the soldiers and escorts all got ready to accompany the king to his fair maiden. But as the king turned in his newly sewn regal robes to pick up his scepter, he realized that if he came to

her wearing all this and with all the pomp and ceremony he would never be sure if she loved him or the power of his throne. So he canceled that idea and decided to find another way to meet the girl of his dreams.

Perhaps, he thought, that if visited her town as a traveling stranger. He dreamed how he could sweep into town as a mysterious stranger, traveling a long dangerous journey and by weaving this mystery around himself he would surely catch her attention and win her love. But then again, he thought, would he really know if she loved him, for him, or more for the mystery of a wandering stranger passing by. She may fall in love with the allure of traveling with him to foreign lands and going outside her tiny village. So this idea wouldn't work of course and so he scratched this idea off his list.

Then he thought what if he did come to her village as a stranger, but not as a mysterious traveler but as someone looking to live there, to find work. The rich powerful king, decided that he would put on servants clothes, take no money, no security or sign of his power, but go simply as someone in need seeking a place to live. And so that is what the young king of the vast kingdom and power and riches did, he went into that town a homeless vagrant, getting a job in their village, working besides the people of the village, eating the food the village produced, finding a place to sleep in that village. He lived there amongst them and worked with them and became their friend, one of them, winning the trust and the the eventual love of the young woman. Not as the King, not as the rich powerful ruler, not as the All powerful Lord, but instead as one of them living their story and feeling their pains and sorrows and hopes.

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. Christ the Lord, the almighty king is the incarnation of God in human form, choosing to leave that power and to become like one of us. The Lord loved the people of his kingdom so much that he became one of us and lived and worked among us so that we can come into a close relationship with him, like a bride groom coming to seek his bride, the Lord comes to join us with him forever. The Word became flesh and lived among us. That is what verse 14 tells us in our Gospel reading. We could also translate that beyond just living with us, some have the Word becoming flesh and dwelling with us. And yet another has the Word became flesh and pitched tent with us. I like that image – pitched tent with us. That is what the more literal image would have been in the original Greek language. It goes beyond just coming for a visit or stopping in, it goes beyond just living with us. It is pitching tent. The image of God in the tabernacle, the tent of the Lord that traveled and lead

the people through the wilderness for forty years would be an image that we should recall from scripture. The people knew when they saw that tent, that was the place of the Lord in their midst, God's very presence, very being in their lives, in their existence. Now the Lord has come again in physical flesh, to be born and live, to work, to grow, to hope, to dream, to be one of us, incarnate in the flesh. To dwell with us as if pitching tent. The old Israelites would understand this image of God in the tabernacle amongst us.

But it also goes so much further, God pitched tent with us, among us, as one of us because of this glorious desire to be in relationship with us. In order to have such a relationship with you and me, we needed a new revelation, image, view of God, not the all powerful, fearful God that is far off, but the one who stands with us now as one of us. When the Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us, Christ went through what every human goes through. All of us find ourselves going through stages of life, temptations, anticipations, moments we cherish, moments we dread, things we can not wait to do and things we would rather forget all about. We know that God through the Word made flesh. Jesus the Christ, went through these very same moments and understand exactly what we are feeling and dealing with. We know that the home of Jesus was probably a meager one because his earthly father was Joseph, a carpenter, a simple man in a small town. It's a living, never getting rich, but just getting by. Jesus grows up in this family, this household, with more younger brothers and sisters that strained the budget even more. He must have gone through all that is common to all homes, sibling fighting and teasing, perhaps even seeing selfishness and squabbles over family matters. Jesus we know was Jewish and as such was brought up as a Jew. He probably was raised much like all the Jewish boys, learning the faith and being an apprentice to his father, working hard, learning, sweating, hoping and dreaming. He saw death, he saw life, he knew love, and knew what hatred does. He saw sickness and need, he saw first hand the horrors of what neighbor can do to neighbor in a world of hatred, violence and pain. But through it all he did not fall away from his purpose and he did not sin, following the way of the cross, to die for all our sakes, taking the punishment we all deserve so that we can be freed from our sins. He died and was buried. And we know that on the third day he was resurrected to never die again, the first born of the everlasting kingdom. This is the incarnate word of God, God made flesh, God amongst us and with us. God almighty. This is the image we are given of our Loving God, who came to be with us and save us, overcoming everything and winning for us a place in that kingdom now and forever. Amen.

May the peace and grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. Amen.