

The Word
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.

Today our Gospel lesson is about the Word. Unlike the other three gospels that have a synopsis of Jesus' life, John's Gospel is more based on the symbolism of identifying the messiah. But sometimes John is almost too symbolic and his message gets a little confusing. Right here in this opening prologue of his gospel we get the images of Word, Flesh, Light, Grace, Truth, and Son. These words have so much meaning and yet we hear them all the time in such common everyday ways. But here when John links them together they mean so much more.

First off John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh. That image of the Word is difficult to understand right from the very beginning of John's Gospel. "In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Try to think back when was it that you first learn what WORD meant. It is hard to do isn't it. No Vocabulary test ever has the word W-O-R-D on it. Define Word and Spell it. I can't ever really remember being taught about this expression, it just always was, the word is Run spell run, the word is house spell house. The concept of the meaning of W-O-R-D was just simply assumed from our earliest ages. It was something that was always a part of our lives, a part of how we communicate and come to understand something. Even as I am standing here preaching Words to you, you are hearing individual Words that explain, inform, define, give meaning to the communication I am using to speak to you with. That is the word.

And Jesus is that very Word, the one who explains, informs, defines, gives meaning to the communication between us and God. He is the ultimate revelation of what God has and is doing. He is the living explanation of the promise of God on earth. The Word, God's communication, has been with God since the very beginning.

And just to clarify the Heresy that has been bothering me all week since I saw the Celebrate inserts, Jesus is not created. The explanation of the optional reading from the intertestamental book Sirach talks of wisdom (a female image of an all Godly knowledge - very prevalent in certain Old Testament and intertestamental books.) In this explanation it says that wisdom (the female imagery) was linked to Christ and gives the impression that Christ was created. That is incorrect. The understanding of human wisdom and Godly wisdom as defined by humans was created in the beginning. But Christ has always been. He is God and is simply another image of God revealed to us so that we can communicate with God's love in a new way. It is a heresy, against the bible, to believe that Christ was created.

God has been and always will be and he reveals himself to us in the forms of the Holy Trinity. We know God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All one but three ways of communicated and coming to understand God.

So when John says that the Word was in the beginning, that the word was with God and that the Word was God, it means exactly that. At creation God the creator breathed the Spirit out and spoke the Word – Let there be Light, and there was light. All three God the Creator, God the Spirit, breath and God the Word present at the very beginning. The Word is what we hear and come know and see of God's magnificence and glory found in the fulfillment of the Son.

Now in Jesus, instead of just simply words spoken out, we see the bodily form, the word made flesh, the word made present in skin and in bodily form that we can touch, hear, experience, relate to, and describe. Not since before the Fall did God walk side beside with humans, not since Adam walked in the garden with the Lord did humanity have that close relationship with God. Now in Jesus we see this physical communication, of actions, deeds and love that showed us God's living Word. Our fleshy form allows us to be vulnerable to have pain and suffering. To have joy and laughter. To eat and work, and cry and sweat. In taking on human form, Jesus also became open to walking beside us and feeling our same emotions, pains, joys and sadness. Jesus was made man, took on flesh so that we may receive the WORD, the very communication of God in yet this new bodily way.

But that is not the only image John gives us of this great gift of Jesus Christ. He also reveals the image of Jesus the Light. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. This is a special image of a light that does more than radiant at 60 watts or 75 watts. It is a light that reveals and discerns into the darkest corners. It knows and radiants in our past, our present and into our future. It is a revealing light that knows our sinful inclinations. Opening up wonderful possibilities to make our life fuller and more meaningful. It is a light that stays always present ahead of us no matter which way we turn calling us from our sinful walk to follow the path of God. It is a light that shines into our hearts, minds and souls and knows all about us.

And that is why John continues in his prologue in his Gospel reading to give us yet another image of Jesus, another symbolic meaning, of Jesus the one who saves. It is this child who is born into this world to win for us a place in God's family. Jesus comes into to be our savior, so that all who turn to him and believe in him, he gives the power to be children of God. Our past darkness, our past sinfulness, our mistakes and regrets are washed away, and in that light that shines and shows us the way to God also lifts us and emblazons us with a new name a child of God. The good news here of John's gospel is that we are not lost in the darkness forever, we have a help, the grace of God who loves us so much that he sends Jesus in human form, communicating to us

the forgiveness, the redemption of our sinfulness on the cross, and the mark that we are God's people forever.

And then finally John brings us to his final imagery for Jesus in this prologue. This infant child who breaks into this world, God made flesh, the light and redeemer of the World, is all truth. We live in a world where there is deceit and cheats and liars. We grow up first listening to parents and teachers, then we hit our teen years and try to rebel to become our own person, seeking that fullness and completeness. We go to work or college and try to find a purpose. We get married, have children, establish a business or career, seeking purpose and meaning. We retire and try to enjoy life still searching for purpose and meaning. All the while we have the one truth here right before us – Jesus Christ. John's Gospel begins with this truth and it continues through to the very end of his Gospel, when Jesus, bleeding and beaten stands before Pilate, the earthly ruler of that land, the one with human power and authority, and Pilate hears Jesus say. Everyone who belongs to the Truth listen to my voice. And Pilate struggling with this asks Jesus- What is Truth" Even Pilate seeks truth. Jesus declares that we listen to his Word, to see the light, to receive the grace, to know the savior the truth of God.

The truth is that we are children of God, not of this world, or of this place or of the things of this age, but we are children of God forever. The truth revealed in the Word is that the Son comes to give us this knowledge, this blessing, this promise.

As we head toward the last week of Christmas, and set our sights onto a new Year, let us remember the imagery of John's Gospel, the beauty of his prologue the reveals to us the very imagery of God as the Revealed WORD, or shines into our lives the light that is eternal, that communicates all emotions and pains and sorrows and lifts them up to forgive, washing away and redeeming us in grace, claiming us as God's children now and always. This is the truth, receive the truth of Jesus Christ into your heart, mind and soul this day. And now the freedom of God's love. Amen.

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