

## Sermon for January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Second Sunday of Christmas

### John 1:1-18

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD  
AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Here we are at the beginning of **2015**. I do not know about you, but **somehow** it does not seem like it has been **15 years** since we were so concerned about Y2K. Possibly 2015 will be a year of new beginnings for you and for your family. **This** is the time of the year when **most** of us make resolutions to begin a new behavior of some sort. One of my resolutions for this year is I am going to **try** to be more focused and to **not** procrastinate. Let's see how **that** works out!!!!

The other day as I was preparing for this sermon I was thinking of our **gospel** reading for today and looking over the Christmas hymns in our cranberry hymnal. I noticed that **many** of these hymns: Hark the Herald, Angels From the Realms, Infant Holy, Infant Lowly, Away in a Manger, Silent Night, It Came Upon a Midnight Clear remind us all of the blessed birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Each of the hymns I looked at had a reference to the birth of a baby. I did not find **any Christmas** hymns that **specifically** talked about the 'Word Made Flesh'; although there may be one out there somewhere.

In the gospels of Matthew and Luke there are the stories of Jesus' birth. Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy and in Luke we find the more '*traditional*'

birth story which we use on Christmas Eve. Mark's gospel begins with John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. In John's gospel, our reading for this morning, you may have noticed something **very** different.

At the start of John's gospel we hear some of the beginning words of the Bible reechoed, ***In the beginning*** *God created the heavens and the earth.* If we look at our reading for this morning, John tells us *'In the beginning was the Word (capital "W"), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He, the Word, was in the beginning with God.'* Just who was this 'Word' that John was referring to anyway because if one was reading this gospel for the first time it might be a challenge to understand just who John was writing about.

For **many** of us, me included sometimes, John's gospel is a bit more abstract and possibly less clear cut and straightforward than the other 3 gospels but in this reading from John I would like to point out the **relationship** language. The relationship language which brings God closer to us, His own creation. Without mentioning Jesus until **verse 17** John writes, *'All things came into being, in **him** was life, life was the **light** of all people.'* Next John gives us information regarding John the Baptist, *'a man sent from God, a witness to **testify**, so all might **believe** in the true light who is to come, a light which **enlightens** everyone.'* Back to Jesus again, *'he was **in** the world, the world **came** into being **through** him, he came to what was **his own**, to all who **received** and **believed** in Him he gave power to*

*become children of God born of God.’ ‘The Word **became** flesh, **lived** among US, WE have **seen** God’s glory full of truth and grace and **because** of that fullness WE have **received** grace upon grace.’ Jesus’ name is **finally mentioned** as the one from whom ‘grace and truth came, the one who was **close** to the Father’s heart, who has **made him known** to US.’ Jesus was **close** to the Father’s heart—how much more **relational** can that be????*

**Our** relationship with God is the main focus in John’s gospel. There are key **themes** which John uses over and over again. They are: light or seeing, knowing, life, believing, witnessing or testifying, truth, abiding or resting, and glory. **All** of these relationships are included within these first 18 verses.

For **just** a moment I would like to put our attention to the concept of Jesus’ life being the light in the world; the light **shining** in the darkness which the **darkness** could not overcome. I want to focus on this because light **always** makes a difference in darkness, it is hard to see when we are in the dark, seeing is believing, and there is a challenge for our community of faith as we dwell in the light. The **idea** of light brings about some thought regarding the saying, ‘it is always darkest just before the dawn’.

What **is** it about having Jesus in our lives that makes our life better? I am sure you all have your **own** answers but here are a few thoughts: John’s description of Jesus as the light of the world changes our perspective and gives us another way

to look at the **gift** of God's Son who has come to **overcome** the sin and darkness of this world, in John's presentation of Jesus we can make sense of the **Word of God** through the eyes of spirituality, and as we grow to understand Jesus as the light we are brought to a place of faith through an understanding of the **power** of God's **creative** spirit.

For those in the world who do not yet know Jesus think about when light **suddenly** appears, it can take some time for our eyes to adjust. In the **initial** moments we may not really realize what we are seeing, **especially** if we have been living in the dark for a long time. **Sometimes** for those who have been living in darkness for **much** of their lives it can take some time for the light to be **perceived and accepted**.

To believe what one is seeing **sometimes** takes a leap of faith, **trusting** in something which might not be understood. To **believe** in Jesus means opening our heart to **believe** that God has so much love for us that He **wanted** to send His Son to live **as one of us**—to be **at one with us**.

Here is a **challenge** for us. When the light **does** come, one must choose to either stay in the darkness or to move forward toward the light. This is **not** always an easy decision. The light **can** make things look better. With this in mind, Jesus came into the world so those of us who want to know God more fully can see God's nature as grace and truth.

As a community of faith when we choose to be the light of Jesus Christ revealed we need like minded faithful people who will **stand together** in times of struggle and tough times which again is not always easy. We **certainly** have had our ups and downs here at Eden in recent years. But God has **never** left our side. The **light** of Jesus Christ continues to shine down on us in good times and in the not quite so good times. This congregation **would not have survived** as long as it has if this were not so.

John's gospel gives us the opportunity to be in relationship with God formed and created through the **Word made flesh**. In the **light** of Jesus God **speaks** to us with life giving words showing **each** of us the **power** of God. **This** is what the life of Jesus was all about: what God **will do** and **will go** through to be in relationship with us.

At this time of the year in **some** circles there is a wondering about the **darkness** in the world and is there **still** good out there? In John's gospel there is a resounding 'yes'. We learn of it in God's radical action of coming to us in a manner which we can grasp. **This** is why Jesus came to earth to dwell among us, to **bring** truth and grace, to be the **light** in the darkness of this world—the light **no** darkness can **ever** overcome. What it is important to do is to have the **faith to believe** that God sent his one and only Son to take on the fullness of humanity to

**show us** all God **the Father's** own relational nature. All thanks be to God.

**AMEN**