



First Sunday after Christmas
December 27, 2009
The Rev. Charles E. Connelly

This morning we hear the beginning of the Gospel according to John. The passage, known as the Prologue to John, opens with, “In the beginning was the Word...” This concept of the Word can be difficult to understand. The Word is more than speech. The Word is God in action; creating, revealing and redeeming.

Hebrew tradition sees the spoken word as a dynamic entity with its reality and power rooted in the personality of the one who utters it. Here the Word, which existed before time began, is Jesus Christ. We are told that it was through Jesus that all things came into being. When Jesus came into the world as a helpless little baby on Christmas Day, he became the source of light and life for the entire universe.

The Incarnation is a startling mystery of cosmic proportion. The eternal Word became fully human – a genuine enfleshment through which Jesus could experience feeling and need, be crucified and be killed. Jesus is the only one who has seen God; thus it is through his life, death and resurrection that we see God’s love for the world.

When we can see Jesus as the preexistent Word present at the time of creation, then we can understand that his purpose was to come to his own home place and to his own people – those prepared for his coming by God’s loving self-disclosure which we know through the Old Testament – so that they might receive him, believe in him, and be empowered by him to become the children of God.

This is perhaps the hardest thing to remember about Christmas. We don’t really celebrate Christ’s birthday, remembering something that happened long ago. We celebrate this astonishing fact: God entered our world so thoroughly that nothing has been the same since. And God continues to be incarnate in our midst, in the men women and children who form his body, the Church. We celebrate Christ’s continuing birth in his members, accomplished by the power of the Spirit through the waters of Baptism.

It is through Christ’s incarnation that we are empowered in our daily lives as Christ’s own people. It means that Christ loved us so much that he came to dwell among us to save us – that’s the gospel, the good news – but also that he came to dwell among us to instruct us in how we are to live our lives.

Jesus summarized all of the law – the first five books of the Bible – and the words of the prophets found in other books of the Old Testament. It's all about love, he said. Jesus told us what we must do. Love God. Love your neighbor. Love means putting others ahead of ourselves. God must be first in your life; not an afterthought. Helping others must be a priority in your life, not something you do when you have a little bit of free time. Jesus loves us, and love is what Jesus expects from us. Love is what Christmas is all about.

This sermon was preached by the Reverend Charles E. Connelly on the First Sunday after Christmas Day, December 27, 2009, in Saint John's Church, Tampa, Florida.

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