



Sermon for Christmas Day
Rev. Jonathan Stepp
December 25, 2019

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A man was rushing around on Christmas Eve trying to find a gift for his wife and was shocked to discover that, once again this year, many shops were closing early for the holiday. Finally he found a department store that was going to be open for five more minutes so he rushed in and ran up to the first clerk he saw and said “please help me, I need to find a gift for my wife before you close!”

So the clerk picked up a tiny bottle of perfume and said, “how about this, it’s only \$100.” The man winced – “I need something a little cheaper.” The clerk picked up a slightly larger bottle of perfume, “here’s one that’s only \$50.” The man ran his fingers through his hair and hemmed and hawed for a moment until the clerk picked up an even larger bottle, “this one’s only \$10.” The man replied, “I tell you what, just show me the cheapest thing in this store.” So the clerk help up a mirror.

Christmas gift giving can be stressful, so I hope your efforts all turned out well this yea. Christmas Day is here and it’s finally time to slow down from all the rushing and enjoy the blessings we have received. For example, our Christmas Day gospel text draws our attention to God’s gift to us. It describes the Word of God – the Son, the second person of the Trinity – giving his life to humanity in order take hold of us and bring us safely into the life of God.

One of the amazing aspects of this gift of the incarnation – the gift of God becoming flesh and blood and making his dwelling among us – is that God did not cease to be God by becoming human. And therefore Jesus is unique in all of existence: he alone is fully God and fully human at the same time.

This reveals something profound about the words we hear today in the gospel: when it says that “the Word became flesh and lived among us” it is describing a permanent change in the relationship between God and humanity. The word in Greek translated “lived among us” literally means he “pitched his tent” among us, which sounds somewhat temporary until we think back to the story of ancient Israel. After they left Egypt, on

their 40 years of wandering before they entered the promised land, they lived in tents and, in fact, the temple where they worshiped God was a tent, sometimes called the Tent of Meeting.

When we view the message of the Gospel of John from this perspective we realize that John is telling us that God has joined us on our journey to the Promised Land. God has pitched his tent with us, alongside our tents, and taken up residence in our neighborhood – giving us the gift of sharing in his own life.

The good news message of Christmas is the good news that we are not alone in our journey through this life. God himself, in flesh and blood as Christ, is walking with us and leading us home to the land of promise. Whatever trials or triumphs, whatever suffering or joy, we face in the upcoming year and in the years to come, we do not face them alone. God is with us, God has given us life in his life, God has become flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Amen.