

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

John 1:1-18

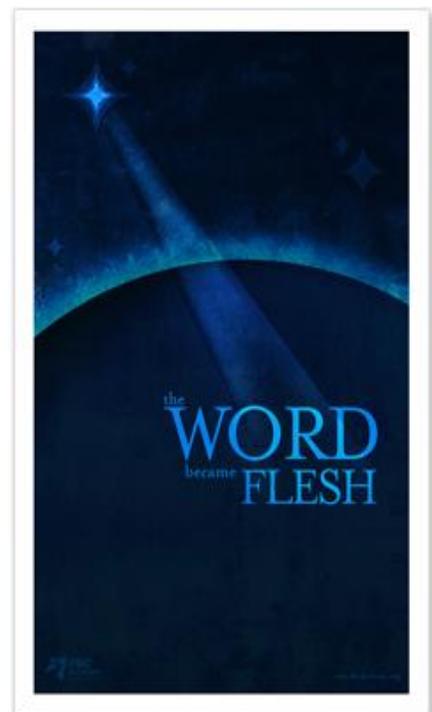
Key Verse: 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Most of our Christmas stories are from the gospel of Luke and Matthew. The gospel of John does not tell us details surrounding the birth of Jesus. Still, today's passage can be called John's Christmas message. As usual, John does more than presenting facts. He takes us behind the scene and tells us the deeper meaning of Jesus' coming. He says in verse 14: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Let us think about the meaning of Jesus' birth from today's passage.

First, Jesus was born to reveal God to us. Look at verses 1-2. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.* In these verses, the Word is capitalized, because it refers to Jesus. In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God and Jesus was God. He was with God in the beginning. What did Jesus do in the beginning with God? As the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, Jesus created the universe. Verse 3 says: *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.* Jesus is the Creator God who created everything we see and touch, and everything that we cannot see. All things were made through him. There is nothing in this world that came into existence by itself. It was Jesus the Creator God who brought them into existence. St. Paul says in Colossians 1:15-17: "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Many people consider Jesus as just a historical figure who appeared in the ancient books. To them, he is no more than one of famous figures like Socrates, Confucius or Mohammed. Some people also regard Jesus as a great teacher or social worker. Some even consider him a mythical figure. They have no personal connection to Jesus. They don't feel that Jesus is involved in their personal lives. (Do you feel that way?) But John 1:1-3 teaches us that Jesus is much more than just a famous historical figure. He is the Son of God.



Jesus is the Creator God who created all things. All things were made through him. This is true with our lives. Jesus created our lives. In Genesis 1:26, God said, “Let us make man in our image.” He did not say, “Let me make man in my image.” The Trinity God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, created each of us. He is the source of our lives. He is definitely involved in your life as well as mine. That’s why C.S. Lewis said the following about Jesus: “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (*Mere Christianity*, 52).

Jesus is the Son of God who was in the beginning. This Son of God came to this world, wearing the human body. God who is Spirit came as a human being just like us. Why did he have to do this? It was because the sinful man cannot see the holy God. This is how St. Paul describes the spiritual condition of the sinful humanity in Romans 1: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Ro 1:20-21). People today celebrate the achievements of science and technology. Indeed, the human race has accomplished astounding things. We sent people to the moon. We can build skyscrapers higher than 100 stories. However, when it comes to our spiritual life, we have become foolish. We cannot see God with our eyes. We became spiritually blind. Some people worship man-made objects rather than coming to the Creator God. But God in his mercy did not abandon the sinful humanity. He decided to come to us personally in human form. He came to reveal to us who God is, who we are and what the world is. He came to open our blind eyes to see God and worship him. This is Jesus.

So how did Jesus come to this world? Did he come on a spaceship? Did he come as an angel? No. Let us read verse 14 together. *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* The Word, the Son of God, the Creator God, Jesus, became flesh. The Holy God stooped down to become human flesh. This is more than like a human being becoming a stick bug. God gave up his heavenly glory and honor to become human flesh and made his dwelling among us. He was born to a poor family. He was born in a stable and laid in a manger. No one noticed his coming, except a few shepherds watching their sheep at night. CNN was not there to report the news. But from a spiritual point of view, his coming was an event that changed the human history forever.

Why did Jesus have to come to this world in such a humble manner? Why did he have to come to us at all? It was because the sinful men could not climb up on a ladder to reach God. So God came down on the ladder to be with the sinners. Look at verse 14 again. *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us....* Jesus came to make his dwelling among us. In order to help us and to save us from our sins, Jesus came to live with us as a human being. The other day, I saw Shep. Maria lying down on my

backyard and rolling around with children. She looked like a 10-year old kid. We thank God for helping us to start our CBF ministry this fall. Dr. John, M. Caleb, Pauline, Mary, Thelma, Shep. Maria and Abby are helping our children. To help the little children, they have to lower themselves to the children's level. They have to sit on tiny chairs and talk like children. They have to change the tone of their voice and use simple vocabulary and gesture so that children can hear and understand them. This is exactly what God did when he came to help us. The Holy God lowered himself to the human level to be with us and to help us.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Jesus, the Creator God, came to this world to live among human beings as a living, breathing person. People in Jesus' time could touch the hand of the God Incarnate, talk to him in person, hear his voice and look into his eyes. But it was more than physical things they saw. They could see and experience the heart of God in Jesus. The Son of God showed the mercy of God when he took care of the people in the gutter including a thirsty and lonely Samaritan woman, selfish tax collectors, sorrowful people with leprosy, widows and orphans. They saw in Jesus the love of God and could feel what the love of God is like. They were mesmerized by this wonderful love of God, and since then countless people decided to imitate the life of Jesus. One woman named Mary brought her most treasured possession, a jar of expensive perfume, and poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair to express her love for Jesus. One man named Levi decided to give up his lucrative job and follow Jesus as his disciple because he tasted the love of God in Jesus. One woman named Sarah Barry decided to dedicate her whole life to imitate the life of Jesus by sharing his words with young people still in the darkness of sin. These people saw the Creator God in Jesus. They came to know God personally through Jesus. This is the reason why God came to this world. Let us read verse 18. *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

Moses in the Old Testament really wanted to see God. So he pleaded with God to show him his glory. But God told him that he could not see his face. God said to him, "When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (Ex 33:22-23). Even Moses could not see God's face. But finally, people could see God in Jesus. Jesus said in John 14:9: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Some people are willing to wait for hours in line to see a rock star or movie star. They feel honored to see the celebrity in person. But the Creator God came to this world in person to dwell among us. This is a tremendous blessing for the sinful mankind. This is the reason why John exclaims in verse 14: *We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Let us thank God for sending Jesus to us so that we may see the glory of God through Jesus and come to know the love of God through Jesus.

Second, Jesus was born to bring life to us. Verse 4 says that *In him was life...* Jesus came to bring life to the dying mankind. Jesus says in John 10:10b: "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Some of you might say, "But I already have my life." Well, you have to know that there is a fundamental difference between the

life that Jesus gives and the life you have apart from Jesus. Our physical life in this world is subject to the limitations of time and space. Even with the advances in medicine, our life is temporary. We die after 70, 80 or 90 years on earth. Once you hit 30, your body begins to deteriorate and shows signs of wear and tear. Spiritually speaking, our life apart from Jesus is like the cut flowers in a vase. It may look good for a while but it has no real life in it. But the life that Jesus gives is different. It is eternal life. Jesus says in John 4:24: “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” Those who come to Jesus can drink from him the living water welling up to eternal life. Those who come to Jesus can have dreams and visions for their future. Those who commit their lives to Jesus can have a life that is full. Many children and even some adults are excited about Christmas because of the presents they get. They eagerly wait for Santa Clause to bring some toys for them. But Jesus brings life to us. This is the ultimate gift we can receive from God. This gift will not disappoint us like some gifts we receive for Christmas. This gift from Jesus gives us true joy and peace in our hearts.

How does Jesus give us this wonderful gift? Jesus says in John 6: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.... Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day” (Jn 6:51-54). To give us the gift of life, Jesus had to sacrifice his own life on the cross. His body was torn into pieces as the Roman soldiers flogged him. His blood flowed down when they hammered the huge nails through his hands and feet. The blood was shed to wash away our sin-stained blood.

In Jesus is life. There is no real life apart from Jesus. A question we need to ask is: “What difference does knowing Jesus make in my life?” Some uncommitted Christians might say, “God loves and forgives everyone, so it does not matter how I live as long as I attend church on Sundays.” This is what Dietrick Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace.” The grace of salvation is free to us, but it is not cheap. God paid the highest price for our sins. Jesus gave his own life on the cross. So to know this Jesus should mean a real change in our life. We cannot, and should not, go on living our past sinful, selfish life when we know Jesus. We need to study the word of Christ carefully and faithfully so that we may obey his words as we follow him as committed disciples.

Third, Jesus was born to bring light to us. Look at verses 4-5. *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* Jesus brought the light of life to all mankind. A bright star appeared in the sky on the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Look at verse 9. *The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.* Jesus says in Matthew 4:16: “... the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” Before we meet Jesus personally, we cannot but grope in the shadow of death. It is because of our sin. Sin separates us from God. Sin condemns us to eternal death. But God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son Jesus so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16).

Before I met Jesus, I couldn't help but grope in the darkness of sin. I wandered in the dark alleys of my hometown, not knowing what to do with my life. Actually, from a human point of view, my life looked okay. I was a promising graduate student in our department. My professors expected me to become one of their colleagues. But inwardly I had no peace. I was condemned to death because of my sins. I felt like I was standing in the middle of a dark field with no direction in life. God did not abandon this sinner. He found me. He helped me to study the word of God with a Bible teacher. He helped me to open my heart to repent my sins of selfishness and lustful desires and accept him as my personal Savior. And when I was satisfied with living a Sunday Christian, he called me to campus mission through Mark 1:17, "Come, follow me and I will make you a fisher of men." My mission gives me a clear direction in life. I have a purpose in life because of Jesus. Looking back this year, I am thankful to God for blessing me to share the word of God with several young men, including, Chris, Josh, John, Ben and David. I thank and praise Jesus who came to me as the light of life!

Fourth, Jesus was born to make us God's children. Jesus came to this world to save us from our sins so that we may become children of God (12). God had created mankind in his own image. We were his children. But then, mankind sinned against the Creator and was separated from the Father. Still, God did not abandon us. He sent his Son Jesus to save us so that we may be his children again.

Look at verses 10-11. *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.* The Creator God came down to his created world. It was only natural for his creation to welcome the Creator. But his own did not even recognize him. They did not receive him as their creator. Even animals recognize their mothers. But the sinful humanity did not recognize Jesus. This was true especially with the chosen people of Israel who often fell into idol worship. This is what God said of his chosen people: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Isa 1:2b-3). This broke the heart of God. Still God did not abandon them. He sent many prophets to help them to come back to their sense. Finally, he sent his own Son to save the sinful humanity. And he promised that any sinner can become part of his family by believing in Jesus. Look at verses 12-13. *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

A pastor lost his three-year-old son by accident. He filed a missing child's report and tried his best to locate his son. A week passed and then a month, but there was no sign of his son. Every day was a torture for him without his young son. Finally, after two years, he was thrilled to locate his son in a foster home. When he brought his son home, he lavished on him the best food, clothes, and toys that he could buy. The problem was that his son would not recognize him as his father. The boy had forgotten him. The father noticed that the boy would eat very fast and often hide food in his room, a habit he picked up as he was moved around from one foster home to another. And worse of all, the boy would not call him father. The pastor was deeply hurt by this, but he decided

to love him unconditionally. Then after a year, the boy finally opened his heart and called him father. He embraced his son and cried for joy. Through this experience, the pastor came to know the broken heart of God toward the sinful humanity. God created each of us in his own image. But we failed to recognize him. We did not call him Father with affection. Instead, we rebelled against him by living a sinful life. God's heart was broken.

Amazingly, God still loved us so much that he sent his one and only Son Jesus. Through Jesus, we can come to know the heart of God. We come to know the love of God. Through Jesus the light of life, our spiritual eyes can be opened to see God and call him our Father. How blessed we are to be able to know the Father God and be part of his family! We don't have to be like missing children moving around foster homes.

But someone might ask, "What is a big deal about being the children of God?" We should know that there are certain privileges to be sons and daughters of God. To be the children of God through believing in Jesus Christ means we experience a spiritual rebirth. We are reborn in the image of God. When we lived a life of sin, our life had no meaning, purpose or direction. It was not pretty. Sin made us become slaves of sinful desires. We were selfish like a tax collector. We pursued our lustful desires like the Samaritan woman or the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. We were helpless and hopeless like the paralytic of 38 years. But when we accept Jesus Christ who came down to this world to save us, God changes us into men and women of God with a new hope and a new value system. We no longer live only for ourselves, our selfish desires, but we live for the glory of God, our Creator, and for others. Like the Samaritan woman who left her water jar behind and went to the village people to talk about Jesus after she personally met him, we can live a life of blessing to others by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

This Christmas, let us open our hearts to welcome Jesus who came to reveal God to us, to bring life and light to us, and to make us children of God. Let us make room in our hearts for Jesus and experience the joy of knowing him and serving him, when many people around us are busy-minded and excited about Christmas for the wrong reasons. Merry Christmas!