



Sermon Growth Guide

February 18, 2024
Word Became Flesh



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All for Love - Word Became Flesh

John 1:1-18

Key Verse: John 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.”

Big Idea: God will not abandon his creation to its sin-caused brokenness. Instead he entered our ruined world so that he might redeem and restore it.

Foundations

This is one of the most glorious, profound and soaring passages in the entire Bible. But it is more than mere gospel poetry. It is declaration of who Jesus Christ is. It stands against all those who would settle only for the humanity of Jesus. It affirms in no uncertain terms that Jesus is God in the flesh. The invisible, majestic Creator has come to live in His creation. He has come to live in the home that He has built.

This declaration of the divinity of Christ was necessary since toward the end of the first century, when this gospel was written, the idea that Jesus was just a man was being promoted. John declares forcefully that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. To say Jesus was only human puts Him in the category of a great role model – a good example to follow.

If Jesus is only a pattern for our lives, then that makes us solely responsible for correcting all the world’s ills. If we think of Jesus as only a man, we cripple His ability to enter our lives and transform us from the inside out. If Jesus was only a man, His life would reflect only moral good, but it wouldn’t reveal the very face of God.

But God, out of love, wanted to reveal His character to us by sending His Son to live among us, to die for us, and to be raised to life so that we might have new life.

Understanding God’s Word

Read Genesis 1:1-27.

Both Genesis and John begin with “In the beginning...” What do you think is the connection between Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1? Why does it matter?

John 1:14: The incarnation means we will see the glory of God. What do you think that means?

Applying God’s Word

Matthew Henry writes: “The plainest reason why the Son of God is called the Word, seems to be, that, as our words explain our minds to others, so was the Son of God sent in order to reveal the Father’s mind to the world.”

Read Philippians 2: 1-11; Hebrews 2:14-15.

In our text for today (John 1:1-18) we learn that God “moved into the neighborhood.” (The Message) What do you think it was like for the Son of God to become one of us?

Witnessing God’s Word

Our church’s vision is to be “Light and Life for the City.” If Jesus is the true Light and Life of the world, how does that shape the way we live out our vision statement? How have we “moved into our neighborhoods?”

Well, it was kind of a funny year with Lent starting this week, so early. For some of us, balancing Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day was a little bit of a juggle. How'd you do? Did you make it? Not everyone is a fan of Valentine's Day. I'm sure some non-fans thought, "Finally! Sweet justice!" But it gets us all thinking about love, and that's what we are going to think about from now through Easter. God is a God of love. Do we forget that? The world seems to forget. **Word Became Flesh**. Why did Jesus come? Why did Jesus die? Why did Jesus rise again and call us to follow him? It was **All for Love**.

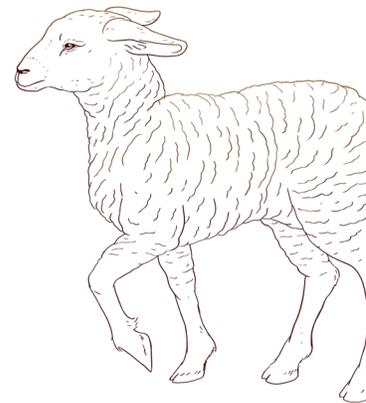
And love is easy to forget. You know about the man whose wife asked, "Do you still love me after all these years?" The man said, "I told you I loved you when I married you. If anything changes, I'll let you know." Anybody in here like that? Love is easy to forget, and when we forget God's love, bad things happen. When we forget God's love, we believe lies about God. Maybe God is mean. When we forget God's love, we lose our own worth and so we set our identity on things like our ability to play a sport, or win at work, or gain a sum of money. When we forget God's love, we start to believe it is up to us to find our own satisfaction and we run at all kinds of poisonous things to make us happy. When we forget God's love, we succumb to fear. All fear is forgetting God's love. We lose sleep, in a constant state of anxiety waiting for the bottom to fall out. We went to a water park some years back with a waterslide that starts on a trapdoor. You stand in this tube in your bathing suit just waiting for the floor to open up and drop you. It was fun! It's no way to live. Let's remember God's love.

We stole Young Life's homework for this series. Don't tell Newt. They did some training on Generation Z, starting born in the 1990's, today's teens and new adults. Each generation has questions they need to answer about life, and each week we will talk about one that Gen Z asks. The first one is, Gen Z asks: Am I safe? This generation grew up with 9/11 in their childhood, Iraq and Afghanistan,

and the 2008 financial crisis, the rise and fall of the Denver Broncos. No, not that. Seriously, school shootings, wars, lots of things to make them wonder, am I safe? Is the bottom about to drop out? Let's remember God's love. Why did Jesus come from heaven?

John starts with a profound sentence: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) The first readers of this sentence would have gasped. At least three gasps! They probably dropped the book on the floor. "In the beginning." Gasp! "In the beginning? Those are the first three words of Genesis. You mean?" Yes. Just as much as God created all things out of nothing, now God steps forward to create again, to create salvation. "In the beginning" doesn't mean the first second on the clock; it means God makes the clock; God makes time. It is God, in a position of eternity, outside of time and space and matter, creating time and space and matter. The very first things, the prime principle, the root of all being and existence. The beginning. Something just as big is happening.

Genesis says, "In the beginning, God." This says, "In the beginning was the Word." Gasp! "Word" here is "Logos." If you're not familiar with *logos*, it is one of the top Greek words to learn in studying the Bible. It's where we get "logic" and all our studies and sciences, biology, anthropology, geology, all that. This is a jaw-dropper the way it is used here. The Word. To the Hebrew mind, "the Word of God" is Torah, Bible, but also sometimes personified, it's a character in the story. The Word of God is God's own self-expression, God sharing with us, not just information, but who He is, "the self-assertion of the divine personality." (Merrill Tenney) To the Greek, *logos* is the inherent rationality pervading the universe and holding it together. We talk about intelligent design. The ancient Greeks saw that design and attributed it to the *logos*, the logic, the order, the Word. In one phrase, John has married Hebrew and Greek, Jew and Gentile, theology and philosophy.



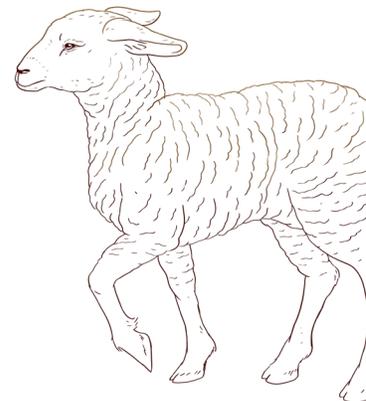
“And the Word was with God.” Gasp! How can that be? Only God is the Creator God. Only God is unmade; everything else is made. If the Word was on that side of the Creator/ Creature divide, then that means... Yes! Gasp! “... And the Word was God.” The Word is God. The Logos is God. Jesus is God. If you’re familiar with it, sometimes you pass by it without the wonder. We get used to driving around next to Pikes Peak. Don’t miss the wonder, the beauty, the gasp. This is about Jesus. This is about God being an eternal community, a Trinity, of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. This is the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. “He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 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.” (John 1:2-5) God spoke and there was unconquerable light penetrating darkness, there was order (*logos*) conquering chaos, there was life. Remember Genesis? There was nothing, a void, God filled with life. So now the same. Light. Word. Life. Where do we find it?

“There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.” (John 1:6-7) John the Baptist said, “if you’re looking for light, order, life, look here at Jesus.” “The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 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.” (John 1:9-11) The world had gone bad. The world God made was so lost, it didn’t recognize the Creator who made it when He came. That’s how far, that’s how corrupt it was—how corrupt it is. “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12) Here we see to receive is to believe. How do we gain the gift God

has for us? How do we receive adoption as children of God and heirs with Jesus? How do we see Jesus? Believe and receive.

And here’s our verse: “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.” (John 1:14) The Word became flesh. The Logos, the Word of God, the Son of the Father, Jesus stepped down out of heaven and took on flesh. This is Christmas. This is baby Jesus in Bethlehem, right? Well, it’s not Christmas so let’s look at it without all the glitter and frosting. God, the Word, Jesus—see, Jesus is God; the Word is God; if you are on the Creator side, if you are Creator, you are God—God took on flesh. Scripture gives us glimpses of the heavenly realm: Job 1 where the angels and hosts are before the throne of God, or Isaiah 6 where the Lord is high and lifted up with seraphim and cherubim, angels and all that. Psalm 103 says, “The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.” (Psalms 103:19-21) Picture it. What did they think to see the Son, the Word, step down from the throne and move toward fallen and corrupt creation? Prophets dreamed it. Isaiah said, “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!” (Isaiah 64:1) One day, He did. Zechariah prophesied, “Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.” (Zechariah 2:13) One day He did. God stepped down from heaven and took on flesh. Word became flesh.

The angels must have looked on speechless as Jesus stepped down and walked through their ranks. This is what inspired the hymn going all the way back to the Liturgy of St. James in the



400's: "Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand; ponder nothing earthly minded, for, with blessing in His hand, Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand. Rank on rank the host of heaven; spreads its vanguard on the way, as the Light of light descendeth, from the realms of endless day, that the powers of hell may vanish, as the darkness clears away. At His feet the six-winged seraph, cherubim with sleepless eye, veil their faces to the Presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry, 'Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Lord Most High!'" Amen. Merry Christmas. The next time the hosts of heaven heard the voice of the Son of God, it was a Why did he do it? Why did he leave the impenetrable, holy courts of the Most High God to become a human, a baby—a vulnerable, unprotected, infectible, killable human being? Why? The answer: all for love.

We work hard to protect ourselves from harm. We use money, we use power, we even use religion, thinking the more important we become the less susceptible, the less touchable, the less woundable—you can't hurt me if you can't reach me. Jesus wasn't like that, was He? In fact, He got angry with religious leaders who used religion to keep separate, to protect themselves from harm. John Ortberg, in *Love Beyond Reason*, says, imagine a hospital where the only goal of the doctors and nurses was to keep themselves from contact with infection or hurt. "Great day at the hospital, darling. Did not touch a single sick guy!" "Oh. How many died?" "Well, lots. But I'm good!" Jesus knew, you can't heal what you won't touch. Well, the whole world was infected. The entire world was sick. What would God do? Ortberg said, "[The world] is contaminated at every level. It should have been quarantined from heaven. No reasonable God would go near it with a ten-foot pole. But Jesus is not a reasonable God. He became a human being, He took on your uncleanness and mine. But instead of

the world infecting Him, He infected the world." Jesus infected the sick world with His healing, His life over death, His light over darkness, His truth and grace and fullness.

Am I safe? There is nothing safe about this world. It's a messy, broken, fallen, infected world. To be human is to be subject to harm, vulnerable. It's from the Latin *vulnus* meaning "wound." Woundable. Well, I want to be safe. I long to be safe. C. S. Lewis said, "There is no escape...no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell."

Are you safe? No. But I will tell you this. Jesus stepped down from impenetrable heaven so that you could be saved. Are you safe in this life? No. But Jesus, who was safe, made Himself unsafe, endangered, vulnerable, so that you could know your soul is safe in Him forever. Jesus stepped down and Word became flesh so you could see God. "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." (John 1:18) God came. Jesus came. Jesus became unsafe so you could be safe. Why? He did it all for love.

