

## **THE WORD MADE FLESH**

John 1:1-14, Hebrews 1:1-4

In the beginning God spoke a Word and worlds sprang forth. Stars spun through the sky. Galaxies swirled about an infinite universe. And among the planets circling those countless stars one (at least) was blessed with plentiful water and a suitable climate. And at God's Word life sprang forth: One celled amebas and bacteria, plants, insects, fish, reptiles, mammals ...zebras and butterflies, eagles and mollusks, whales and tree frogs ... a fantastic profusion of life, an abundant planet filled with living, growing things.

God spoke another Word. In the midst of the world's abundant life he created humankind in his own likeness and image. Of course nothing could quite *look* like God for God is infinite Spirit and human beings are merely flesh and blood. But Human beings could *reason*. They used *words* to communicate; they had moral insight; they had the ability to imagine and create. They had the capacity to love one another and to love God. And God gave them *freedom* to do what they would do and be who they would be. In these ways they reflected God's own image. God spoke a Word and it was so.

God loved his whole creation and he saw that it was very good. But he especially loved those human beings whom he created in his own image. God invited them into relationship with him. But frankly they weren't very good at it. They weren't very faithful or true. They rebelled. They used their precious freedom to do unspeakable things. Things that so denied and twisted that likeness and image of God within them that it became almost unrecognizable. So God spoke another Word on Mount Sinai to His servant Moses and the Law came into being. The Law spoke of a way to follow God and be in relationship with Him. It helped form a people as God's own to be in covenant with Him.

God's chosen people to whom the law was given failed time and again to follow the law. So God spoke other Words through his prophets. In these Words God pleaded with His people to return to him, to humble themselves, to be obedient and true, to treat one another with justice, and to be faithful to God. In this Word God promised a future day when He would dwell with his people, when he would judge the world and bring wrongs to right. This Word taught his people to hope.

But it seemed the more God spoke his Word the less his people heard him. The relationship God longed to have with not only his chosen people but with all people everywhere, wasn't happening. God's Word wasn't getting through.

Have you ever tried to write a special note to someone you loved very much, but you just couldn't find the right words? Some of you may remember a popular song from the 60's by a musical group called *The Association*. The song was called *Cherish*.

*I was beginning to think that man had never found the word that would make you want me. That had the right amount of letters, just the right sound, that would make you see, make you feel, you were driving me out of my mind... Cherish is the word...*

Pardon my singing, but it's a great song about trying to find just the right word to tell someone you love her or him. *Word after Word God tries and then finally tries once more to say it right, to get it all into one final Word what he is and what human is and why the suffering of love is precious and how the peace of God is a tiger in the blood.* (F. Buechner, 'Air for Two Voices' in 'A Room Called Remember', pg. 85)

*Long ago, the letter to the Hebrews begins, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.* When the time was ripe, God spoke a Word and a baby boy was born to parents of modest means, born in a simple stable in a tiny town called Bethlehem.

This Word was something more than the Word spoken at creation, or the Word spoken at Mount Sinai, or the Words spoken by the prophets. In this Word the Creator spoke His own name and placed Himself in his own creation. In this Word the maker of the worlds and suns and planets Himself took on flesh and blood and became a human being and lived among us. In this Word God revealed Himself to the world. In this Word God risked Himself in the world, a tiny, fragile human baby.

This Word was not grand and obvious. It did not thunder from Mount Sinai with lightning and tempests, with pillar of fire and the smoke of volcanic ash. This Word was given quietly, subtly, with restraint, a tiny baby – fragile, innocent, vulnerable, unknowing, a new beginning for God and the world He had made.

The Word of God made flesh – Jesus, God's Son – was God's gift of himself to the world he had created, to the people he had formed and loved. **Jesus was God's revelation in flesh and blood they could touch, in words and stories they could understand, in love they could receive, in servanthood they could imitate.** Jesus was the *Word* God used to express how he felt about the people he had made in his own image. In Jesus God revealed that image, true and undistorted. And in Jesus God has called and invited all people everywhere into the fullness of life as he had always intended it to be.

*God spoke the Word and the Word became flesh and lived among us. And we have beheld his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

God's Word spoken to us through Jesus is a Word of invitation to a broken world. It is an invitation to be born anew and receive new life. It is an invitation to be forgiven and washed clean. It is an invitation to die with him on the cross and rise with him to new life. It is an invitation to follow, to love as he loved, to serve as he served.

God's Word spoken in Jesus is alive and living still. It is the Word we read in Holy Scripture. It is the living Presence we receive in bread and wine. It is the mysterious presence in our midst whenever 2 or 3 or more are gathered in his name. It is the person we meet in prayer. It is the living presence of our risen Lord who lives in our hearts as we invite him in.

The incarnate Word God spoke in his Son Jesus is no longer flesh and blood. God has taken that humanity of Jesus into himself. It is part of who God is. As we reflect God's image, God now reflects our humanity. Our meeting of Jesus is a spiritual meeting with a

personal Savior who is fully human and fully God, who loves us and calls us into new life with him.

God still speaks his Word of love to the world. God still speaks his incarnate Word, the Word made flesh. Only he no longer speaks that Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He now speaks his incarnate Word through us. As we receive his Son he calls us to be the incarnate life of his Son in the world. We are the Word of God made flesh. We are the ones through whom God's love is made incarnate, made flesh and blood reality. We are the ones God uses to touch and heal and love and serve and transform a needy, broken world. God continues to speak his Word of love to the world through you and me. That's a scary responsibility isn't it?

Jesus – the babe lying in the manger ...Jesus who lived and taught, who healed and called disciples, who died on a cross and rose from the grave ...Jesus who we receive in bread and wine ...Jesus who we know in personal relationship ...Jesus who we meet in Scripture ...Jesus' Body – his living presence in the world which we are called to be – Jesus is the Word that describes God's love for the world.

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Thanks be to God and a very merry Christmas. Amen.