

CHRISTMAS EVE HOMILY: “The Christmas Story”

December 24, 2010

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John 1:14 is my favorite verse in the New Testament: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The entire Christmas story is wrapped up in St. John’s magnificent, awe-inspiring statement: Jesus is the incarnate Word. Jesus is the Word made flesh ...the Word of God ...the Word of love ...the Word of truth and grace and beauty. Jesus is the one who is the love of God in human form. Jesus is God’s forgiveness made known in human form ...God’s mercy made known in human form ...God’s justice, truth, and love made known in human form.

This is the Christmas story ... “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” God, so that God could help us, decided to walk among us and to live with us, as one of us - born of human parents, nurtured in a home, and working at human tasks until he died a human death. God among us, God made flesh, God for us - in Jesus Christ. What is remarkable about the Christmas story is not just that God chose to place all God’s glory, beauty, and truth in a human form - though that is remarkable enough, it is that God chose such a simple human being in which to take on flesh.

God’s Word, the Word that was at the beginning of all things, and without which nothing was made that was made, could have taken the form of a royal princess living in some imperial palace, but it did not. God’s Word could have taken on the form of a philosopher, wise and full of truth, but it did not. No – God’s Word, the Word made flesh, was a simple Word - a Word made manifest, a Word made visible in a simple human being, born to a simple peasant woman, and cared for by a simple carpenter in a land that time still seems to have forgotten.

The Word made flesh, the Word of God, is found in its fullness in a babe whose bed was a manger because there was no room for him at the inn. The Word made flesh, the Word of God, is found in all its fullness in a child, who while obedient to his parents, still argued with his teachers, and got lost in the Temple.

The Word made flesh, the Word of God, is found in all its fullness, in a young man who wandered the countryside, teaching the teachers, healing the sick, eating with the sinners, and

forgiving those who needed forgiving. Jesus was the Word of God in its fullness ...yet, this Word of God had no home to call his own, was denied, betrayed, and finally killed in the hope that this Word would not be seen or heard again. God's Word took on flesh, and dwelt among us - and that Word was both accepted, and rejected, but in rejection, and then later in death, God's Word could not be destroyed.

This is the Christmas story, and it is a story that continues today, because the Word of God is an Eternal Word, a lasting Word, and an undefeated Word. Jesus - the Word of God is still among us. Jesus is here as spirit, teaching us what we need to know, comforting us with a comfort that we need, and leading us to the truth that we need to know.

And what is that truth we need to know? Where is the Word for us today? It is in the same place that it was when Jesus walked among us. It is in the deeds of love done by his followers. It is in the mercy that his disciples show to others. It is in the truth that they utter, the justice that they struggle for, and in the forgiveness they offer those who have wronged them.

God's Word is still made flesh today, much in the way that it was made flesh in Jesus. And as it was in Jesus, where the Word was found in a simple man, born to simple parents, so the Word today is found in human form: in your human form and in mine. The Word today is found in our simple acts of love and kindness. The Word takes on flesh when we heal ...when we forgive ...when we seek justice ...when we share ...and when we show mercy.

"I'll be back soon," a World War II soldier told his wife before leaving her and their infant son. Five years of war and fighting went by. The young mother would show their son a portrait of the soldier and say, "See, that's your daddy. One day he's going to come home." In reality, she didn't know what to expect.

One morning the boy said, "Mommy, wouldn't it be great if Daddy would just step out of the picture frame?" In a sense that's what God did 2,100 years ago. As part of God's eternal plan, God stepped out of heaven and became human so you and I could look at Jesus and say, "That's what God looks like." "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." That's the Christmas story. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.