

**“I’ll Be Home For Christmas” Fourth Sunday of Advent December, 24 2017**  
**John 1:14**

**SI:** These four Sundays of December we’re looking at Christ’s Advent through the lens of home. What does it mean to be home for Christmas? In my first sermon I mentioned how when our children were little and went to spend the night with friends for the first few times they got homesick. Will didn’t. But Adrienne and Eliza did. We would get a phone call from the other mom about midnight. She would put one of our daughters on the phone. And with voices quivering they would say: I want to go home.

But here’s the thing, our girls have laughed about it. They both agreed that as soon as they made the phone call, and as soon as they heard mom or dad say: Ok, I’ll come get you (usually mom)—as soon as they heard that, homesickness started to evaporate. And when they actually got into the car with mom, it disappeared completely.

Why did their homesickness go away even though they weren’t home yet? You know why. Home is a person. The big idea in all four of these Advent sermons is that Jesus is our home. He came into this world to make his home with us and in us. Now he’s preparing a home for us. One day he will come to take us home. Alienation you feel in this world. Your feelings of loneliness or sadness. Your longing for identity and security. At root those are homesickness for God. Detached from him, can never find a fully satisfied home here. That’s why Jesus came.

So to be home for Christmas is to know Jesus and be with him. Let’s explore that with just one famous verse. John 1:14 Pray before read it.

**INTRO:** If you want to read what happened at Christmas, Matthew and Luke. They tell us about the shepherds and the angels and Wisemen, Mary and Joseph and the stable and the manger and the baby Jesus. But if you want to read why it happened, what it all meant, read John. John doesn’t go over any of those details, he explains what Jesus birth meant.

He summarizes it in two points.

1. The Word became flesh
2. He made his dwelling among us. Let’s look at each of those points.

**MP#1 The Word became flesh**

John calls Jesus the Word. He says in verse 1 of this chapter and he repeats it here in verse 14.

What does that mean, that Jesus is the Word of God?

A person's word, is the clearest revelation of who he is, who she is.

You might see a person doing something and make certain assumptions, but until that person speaks to you about it, you don't really know

Let's say you ask someone if they want a cup of coffee and they say no.

You say, I thought you like coffee. No, the person says. I don't like coffee.

You say, But I saw you drinking some at so and so's house.

Person says: I was just being polite. They handed it to me without asking.

So what would you like to drink?, you ask. Well, they say: I really like iced tea.

That's my favorite drink.

Or maybe a better example: I go for a morning jog around our neighborhood.

There are other walkers and runners I see regularly and I wave to them.

But if you asked me if I've met them or if I know them I'd say no.

Because we've never talked. Words and speaking necessary to meet someone.

When John says that Jesus is the Word,

he means you can't know God except through Jesus.

You can know some things about God, just like I can know things about those other runners and walkers, how old they are, maybe what street they live on.

There are all sorts of things people can know about God—

that he exists, that he is powerful and good, that he has moral laws—

but you can't know God without Jesus because Jesus is the Word of God.

You can't know his character. You can't know what he loves and hates.

So Jesus is the Word of God.

Then John says that the Word became flesh.

God became fully human. That's how he made himself known.

Last week we were at a concert and one of the songs was *Mary Did You Know?*

Lyrics mention miraculous things Jesus did—walk water, heal blind, calm storm

But there are two lines that stand out above all the rest. One says:

When you kiss your little baby, you have kissed the face of God.

This sleeping child you're holding is the great I am.

Let's just pause here for a minute.

Do you realize how crazy those lines are?

This is the most bizarre and outlandish claim of Christianity.

We believe the Creator of the universe became real human person.

We believe the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was born as a baby boy and held and fed and burped and changed by his mother Mary.

That's the whole point of Christmas. The Word became flesh.

The Word became soft like a baby, vulnerable, subject to harm and pain.

The Word became killable. You can't kill God. God can't die.

But human beings can die and God became fully and completely human and subject to all the vulnerability of life in this broken world.

My new son-in-law, Eliot Kaufmann is from New York, grew up in Queens.

One of the infamous events in Queens was the murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964.

Do you remember that story.

This young woman was assaulted in the street, she was being stabbed and she cried out for help. Up in the apartments lights came on, people looked out.

But nobody came down. Why not? Because nobody wanted to risk their life.

When the lights came on, the assailant ran, but when nobody came down he returned and killed her.

When the God of heaven heard our cries he came down.

He didn't come down at the risk of his life, he came down knowing he would give his life. The Word became killable.

Hebrews 2 draws out the implications of this for us.

Since [we] have flesh and blood, he too shared in [our] humanity . . . For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest . . . Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

We have flesh and blood, he came to share in our humanity.

Why? So that he could be like us in every way.

So he could suffer as we have suffered, be tempted as we are tempted—so in that way he could help us. He understands you.

One of the lines of Scripture we hear sung at Christmas is from Isaiah—

It's that verse that calls Jesus Wonderful Counselor.

We hear it in Handel's Messiah—Wonderful Counselor.

Why is that line worth singing? Why is Jesus the Wonderful Counselor?

Because the best counselors are those who have been through what you are suffering and have come out on the other side.

Counselors like that don't just say: Here's what you need to do, think about this.

They can also say: I've been there. And that makes all the difference.  
The most sympathetic physicians are those who have themselves experienced  
a hospital stay or the operating table.

Christmas says something no other religion says—or would dare to say—  
that the God of the universe has sat on the counselor's couch,  
the God of the universe has been on the operating table.

The Word of God made flesh experienced misunderstanding, loneliness, temptation,  
betrayal, injustice, thirst, and death so we can know God. .

Are you lonely and misunderstood? So was he.

Have you been betrayed? So was he.

Are you broke? So was he.

Are you facing death? So was he.

You can go to him. He's the Wonderful Counselor.

There may be someone here who says:

I did that. I went to God, prayed, he didn't listen to me. He denied my prayer.

I feel like God has abandoned me.

Don't you understand Christmas? Jesus experienced that too.

In the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed: Father, let this cup pass from me.

Jesus felt that prayer so deeply that it says his sweat like drops of blood.

God said no to his earnest request.

And on the cross, in his moment of greatest need he cried:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.

God knows what it's like to be abandoned by God.

Christmas means when you're in trouble, when it feels like God is isn't listening,  
when the things you want most in life are being denied you,  
when the things you claim by faith aren't happening—  
the Wonderful Counselor has been there.

Don't think God is heartless. He's not.

Since we have flesh and blood he shared in our humanity to show us and reveal  
to us his heart of mercy and compassion.

## **MP#2 He made his dwelling among us**

The word John uses for “made his dwelling” is a very carefully chosen Greek verb. There were other words John could have used to get across a basic idea of residing or dwelling.

But he chose a word that has a certain connotation.

It means to pitch a tent.

Why did John use that particular word?

When the Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt, and when they cried out in their distress, God heard their cries. He sent Moses to deliver them.

After bringing them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea on their way to the Promised Land, the Lord told them to make a large tent called the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle was to be their place of worship.

Whenever they moved, pack up Tabernacle and move with them.

When they stopped they would set it up again, pitch the tent.

That’s this verb. Used in Greek translation of the Old Testament.

If you wanted a very literal translation of John 1:14 you could say:

The Word became flesh and pitched a tent among us, tabernacled among us.

John adds another detail.

And we have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

That mention of God’s glory is another reference to the Tabernacle.

When the Israelites would set up the Tabernacle, God’s glory would fill it.

But the people couldn’t look at God’s glory.

His glory was hidden behind a curtain in the tent, hidden in holy of holies.

No one could go back there except the high priest once a year when he was covered with blood from a special sacrifice.

If anyone else looked on God’s glory they would die.

What did that mean?

Why couldn’t the people see God’s glory and live?

If you have ever suffered an injustice. If someone has ever done you wrong.

Then you know that a rift is created between you and the perpetrator.

If it’s something serious, saying I’m sorry doesn’t heal the rift.

It might not be obvious to you what will heal the rift, but you just know, you have this innate sense that there has to be a payment of some sort.

Someone has to pay for the gap to be closed and the wrong to be righted.

The reason you feel that way is because you’re made in the image of God.

Wrongs and evils can’t be ignored and shrugged off.

God doesn't do that. Can't do that. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right!  
There is a rift and a gap between the human race and God.

It's caused by our selfishness. Our meanness to other people.

Our lack of love. Our greediness and pridefulness and lusts. Our sin.  
Those are all offenses against God.

And all these powerful images in the Old Testament, glory of God that will kill.

Mt. Sinai smoking and shaking and consumed with fire.

All of those were ways of underlining this truth—our sin separates us from God.

Even looking on him in his glory and holiness would kill us.

What do we need to get close to God?

We need something to close the gap.

We need atonement and reconciliation.

Someone has to pay.

That's what the Tabernacle and the sacrifices pointed to.

The gap was being closed by God himself.

The rift was being mended. He provided a way.

Because God's people were forgiven, his glory was closer to them—

it was just behind the curtain. All that was needed was someone to open curtain.

All of that powerful symbolism comes together in Jesus Christ.

This is what John says Christmas means—

We get to see God's glory.

We get to look full in the face what Moses and Israel wanted to see but couldn't.

Jesus is the Tabernacle. He's God with us and seeing him we see God's glory.

Instead of smoking mountains and fire and a glory that will kill you—

how does God show us his glory at Christmas? As a little baby.

There's nothing more approachable than a baby.

A couple Sundays ago after church I was talking to a dad who was holding his  
little boy and the kid reached for me. It made me feel 10 feet tall.

Why does it feel so good when a little child in arms wants you to hold him?

I soon realized that he wanted me to hold him because he was intrigued by  
my blue plastic reading glasses. But it still felt good. Looking in that little face.

Or what about little Ava who I just held and baptized. Harmless. Gentle.

The glory of God revealed in the birth of Jesus is the glory of grace.

God has done everything necessary to bridge gap, remove the curse, pay price,  
make himself approachable.

Here's what Martin Luther said about Christmas:

To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became a man, a child, a babe playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save.

As John says: God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

So what does this mean for you?

Let me wrap this up by bringing us back to the theme of home.

You've got to come home. Coming home means coming to Jesus.

Accept him, trust him, open your heart to him, believe in him.

Believe he came down to you and that you don't have to move up to him.

Believe loves you and died for you.

Go to him as your counselor. Ask him for what is on your heart.

Believe that whatever his answer, it is good.

And if you do that—as the Bible says—

he will come in and eat with you and you with him.

When you accept God's gift of Christ, when you come home with Jesus, then you ask: What do you want me to do, God?

How can I show you my gratitude? How can I live as a member of the family?

You know what it's like when you get a little older and gain more perspective and then you come back to your parents' home for the holidays.

You've grown to understand and appreciate more their sacrifices and love—and you say—what can I do for you?

Mom, you've cooked a great meal, you've been serving us all day—

You sit down, let me do the dishes. Yes, sit. I want to do this.

What is that? It's life in the household.

And that's just as important and real for followers of Jesus.

God, thank you for the gift of your Son. Now, what do you want me to do?

Be open to what God would ask you. Be open to his Word.

Be open to the promptings of his Holy Spirit, especially if it involves people in your life who God wants you to treat with kindness.

Merry Christmas, friends.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.