

Living Among Us
Texts: Jeremiah 31:7-14, John 1:10-18
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church – January 3, 2021
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James C. Hefley, a well-respected and brilliant writer, teacher, pastor, editor and publisher, wrote some of the most beautiful and truthful words about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many of you may have heard this before, but especially in this season of the year, I think it bears repeating. Hefley wrote, “Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the Child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness.

He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His Divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a Cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying – and that was His coat. When He was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave.

When He was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Such was His human life – He rises from the dead. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the Centerpiece of the human race and the Leader of the column of progress. I am within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever

sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life”(James C. Hefley, quoted in J.B. Fowler, Jr., *Great Words of the New Testament*. From Charles R. Swindoll. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998. pp. 316-17).

This morning, we talk about the Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. We have just celebrated His birth as a human being, a tiny baby. Throughout the year, we will talk and wrestle at times with His earthly ministry – what it meant for His disciples, the religious leaders of His day, for the common people whose lives Jesus touched and healed, and for us even still today. However, we cannot think about Jesus the Person without considering and keeping in our minds Jesus, part of the Trinity. The Word made Flesh. Jesus the Divine.

What does it mean that Jesus is God? What does it mean that Jesus is the Word – or according to the Greek “Logos?” Brian Stoffregen, pastor of the Faith Lutheran Church in Yuma, Arizona, has this to say about the meaning of Jesus as Logos. Logos is “The revelation of God’s self. I can remember when our boys were infants, before they could speak: How we wished they could tell us what was going on inside of them. They would cry. We would ask, “Are you hungry? Do you hurt? What’s wrong?” Words or some form of communication was needed for us parents to know what is going on inside that small child -- what he is thinking, what he is feeling, what he wants. (That is even true now that they are in their twenties and living in different states. Without the sharing of words in some way, phone, e-mail, instant messaging, we don’t know what they are doing, thinking, or feeling. We are all together at Christmas, where we can “catch up” on each other by talking.)

Jesus, as the Revealer of God, is like that. He communicates to us the thoughts, feelings, and desires of God. Yet, he doesn't just talk about what goes on inside God -- he is God. His life reveals God. In order to know God, one needs to look to Jesus, to listen to Jesus, to try and understand Jesus. Perhaps we misuse Jesus and scriptures (especially John) when they are used as something other than the revelation of God's self to us. Perhaps we need to take more seriously the liturgical comment: "The word of the Lord." It is Someone speaking to us" (From Internet. <http://www.crossmarks.com/brian/john1x1.htm>. 12/15/20).

Our text from John reveals just that. Jesus "was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him... Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Everything that we are, everything that we have, all that we might hope to become is a result of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful God we serve to have sent us Jesus Christ. He sent us His Son – fully human and fully divine – so that we might know God more and that He might show us the way to the Father – a way of grace and truth.

Yet, the world did not know Him. As a matter of fact, most of the world slept right through His birth. All of the signs, all of the prophecies, all of the awe and wonder, and the world slept. The world did not know. Even still today, there are those who do not know Christ. There are those who do not want to accept Christ as Savior and Lord and the Word made flesh.

Throughout Jesus' life, those around Him did not accept Him. They plotted against Him, they threatened Him, and ultimately, they sent Him to the cross. All part of God's Divine plan for humanity, yes, but He was still not accepted. But Jesus was

human – Word made flesh. Jesus was a person. He went through the changes and milestones of life. Although we do not have much chronicled about His childhood, we do believe that He was fully human. We know that His parents, Mary and Joseph, “lost” Him in the temple and were upset that He had stayed behind.

And Jesus felt all of the emotions and feelings that we feel. He suffered loss – He wept at the death of His friend, Lazarus. He knew what rejection felt like. Jesus felt the sadness of having others who did not like Him, who talked behind His back, who heaped both verbal and physical abuse on Him. He felt it all. Jesus knew very personally and intimately the rejection that He experienced even from those who were closest to Him – the disciples. When He needed them the most, they betrayed Him, they denied Him, they left Him.

When we face difficulties in life, when we are in the midst of the storms that rage around us, when we endure our times of loss and pain and rejection and failure and isolation, we can know that Jesus Christ knows what we are going through. “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.” He has been there and done that. He has endured all of this because of the love God has for each of us – a love that is unconditional and pure and holy.

Not all of Jesus’ life was faced with difficulties and trials. The number of people that came to faith in God because of Him was huge. He taught the crowds a new way of living, and He associated Himself with those whom the rest of the world shunned and ostracized. He healed the masses, and those who had disabilities and infirmities were freed from them because of Jesus’ touch and Jesus’ words. Jesus gave hope to those who

did not see hope on their horizons. When He saw the joy and the jubilation over newfound faith, over healing, over reconciliation, I have to believe that He experienced those emotions right along with the people.

He knew joy and celebration. He knew trials and suffering. He experienced death so that we might receive the gift of grace – grace upon grace. He lived among us – then and now. And friends, Jesus Christ knows us – as the Divine and as a human. And He loves us anyway. Let us pray...

Loving God, we thank You for Your Son, the Word made flesh, who lived among us, who saved us, who was full of grace - Your grace - and truth. We celebrate His life and we claim Him as our Savior. Lord, help us to live our days with the assurance that Jesus is always with us - that Jesus understands us - that Jesus has compassion on us - because He was one of us. In His loving name we pray, Amen.