

The Word Made Flesh

John 1:14; Revelation 21:1-3

Sunday, July 3, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction pilgrims vs. settled and belonging

Today's sermon is the first in a series that touches on the Biblical truth brought forward by the events of the birth of the Lord Jesus, honored every year on Christmas. The first hymn for today was the Battle Hymn of the Republic, sung in honor of the founding of our nation and the values of that founding. We believe that God was involved in the events of the founding of our nation and so the birthday of the same is cause for celebration during worship. The rest of the hymns for this month, however, will have a Christmas theme, just like the sermons. The songs and the episodes of Scripture involving Christmas are so wonderful that we decided to have Christmas in July rather than wait until the beginning of Advent to sing these songs and ponder these Scriptures. We'll turn our attention to Christmas again later this year, I assure you, but for now we're going to celebrate Christmas in July, and that includes looking at this great reflection on the birth of our Lord by the Apostle John, particularly verse fourteen, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

- Main Point: Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, joins the human race

The main point today is that Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, came to earth. Not only did He come to earth but He was born into the human race, being born a baby in humble and actually awkward circumstances. He is born in an ancient stable in a cave that was on the property of an inn that was too full for him and his family, who had to travel as His mother was about to give birth and with a father who, until an angel addressed him in a dream, suspected His mother of infidelity and considered divorcing her. He did not come with great pomp, power and ceremony. He came in the most humble circumstances possible, and the Creator actually joined Creation. The Lord, while remaining God, joined the human race.

"dwelt among us"

There is so much in this passage, even just in this verse, to consider but for the sake of focus we will look at just one essential phrase in this one essential verse in the amazing opening chapter of this irreplaceable Gospel. Verse fourteen tells us that Jesus, the Word, became flesh and "dwelt among us." Literally He, "set up his tent" among us. Later in the Bible the human body, as opposed to the human spirit, is called a "tent" and when we enter into eternity we put off this earthy tent, but later are given a new, better and permanent body, a better tent. (2 Corinthians 5:1ff) Jesus "set up His tent" among us because He wanted to be close to Humanity.

cf. with the passage in Revelation

As I understand the culture in the days of the Lord Jesus, living together and eating together had heightened significance. If people ate and lived near you by choice, that indicated that they wanted to live their lives together with you. They wanted to face the challenges and opportunities afforded by the days that we have on this earth together. They would support and defend each other. There was commitment involved, so when the Son of God "sets up His tent" with us, He is making a statement, that He wants to be near, that He wants to be family. This is not peripheral to His plan, but rather at the center of it. Many years later, the Apostle John, having survived the death camp in the mines of Patmos and as the last living apostle of the original twelve apostles, wrote down the astounding vision of the ages that we have printed at the end of our Bibles, called the Revelation. At the end of Revelation, as Jesus sets up His government, brings judgement to the

nations and establishes justice forever, we find that the idea of Him dwelling together with us again arises. The first three verses of Revelation 21, the second to the last chapter of the Bible, says this:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle (a type of tent that described the original, portable temple of the Exodus) of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, God Himself will be with them and be their God..’” (Revelation 21:1-3) It is still, even at the end of the Age, all about the Lord being near us, living life with us, being together forever. So what do we do with that?

- **Application:** the church and the community are valuable and worth maintaining
I remember hearing once that our Mormon friends take yard and building maintenance seriously. It is important for them to make sure the building and grounds are in the best shape possible. They believe that it sends a message to the public, that the Mormons believe that what takes place in their house of worship is important. They take it seriously. Possibly, upon consideration, people outside the church may also start to consider if they should take seriously as well. I think they have a point. How we keep our facility sends a message to the community. Even more important is our fellowship and the maintenance of our relations one to another. We should value our community of the Lord Jesus is willing to go to such great lengths to be with us. Maybe we should also consider that we have a Lord who knows fully the joys and sorrows of life and who understands our struggles. Hebrews speaks of Him as the great High Priest who understands what human life is like, and thus is compassionate.

- **Application:** how does this feel for those who've faced rejection
Not to overdo the point of application, but if Jesus, being who He is, was willing to dwell with humanity at the beginning of John's Gospel, and plans to do so forever at the end of the Book of Revelation, then does that not say volumes about His desire to accept us? What does that say to people who have faced rejection, in friendships and family and sometimes over and over again through life? To the rejected, Jesus shows He is willing to go to great lengths for you, that He values people far more than they value each other or themselves. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us even though He could be anywhere else. It is the opposite of rejection.

- **Conclusion**
The first theological point to Christmas is the Incarnation, the assertion that God the Son, the Creator of all things, joined the human race, remaining fully God yet becoming fully human. He did it all so He could dwell with us. The same idea resounds at the end of Scripture in Revelation 21, at the end of the age. If the Lord takes daily life, worship, community and fellowship so seriously, perhaps we do well to ponder that again, and to cherish the life we have together as a church.

Children's message

love of camping

"dwell" lit. set up tent

God wants to be with us

We should cherish being together