

## Sermon Reading: John 1:1-14

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome<sup>[u]</sup> it.*

*<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

*<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*<sup>14</sup> 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.*

## Sermon Theme: A Light in the Darkness

There's something about Christmas lights shimmering and twinkling in the cold crisp winter air. A bulb that is relatively small casts a decent amount of light pushing away the darkness that surrounds it. In fact, unless that light goes out, the darkness cannot overcome it. There's something about the darkness too. It's not just the young toddler with an active imagination that has a little anxiety when it comes to the dark. The unknown of what's out there, how quickly something can jump out of the ditch while you are driving, the strange noises and weird creaks can really get the mind running. But that tightness one may feel, the uncomfortable, unexpected anxiety, the fear with the darkness is really a result of a much deeper darkness—the darkness of sin.

Sin was never God's intention. If you have brushed up on your Sunday school and catechism lessons, you know how sin entered the world. But in order to gain a different appreciation of the situation, we do as John does in our reading and go to the beginning. John doesn't use these great big churchy words to teach us. Really it's fairly simple words John writes in vv. 1-4: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.** Simple words but deep concepts. Before the creating process began and God said, "Let there be..." the Word was present. Outside of space, outside of time, the Word was. And the Word was with

God because the Word was God. And in case we didn't quite get that John spirals back to nail the point in v.2: **The Word was with God in the beginning.**

So the Word was God, it was there in the beginning, but what is this Word? You know a word is how we communicate with one another. It can be more than just letters strung together, but an entire speech or message. Think of when someone says, "I want to have a word with you." More often than not it isn't just one word but it is a message you wish to share. Without a word we can make some pretty solid assumptions from just seeing an individual. Someone wearing a ring on the ring finger of their left hand is probably married or at least engaged. If that person is wearing a coat indoors, they may be cold, have the chills, or just want to cover up. And then if you see that person eating a steak, you might be comfortable in thinking they like meat. But, if you had never talked to that individual—never shared any words with them—if someone asked you, as you are staring them down, if you knew them, you would say, "No." But having a word with them or a conversation reveals something about the individual so that you can know them on a certain level.

So what is the Word being spoken about here in John 1? It's how God reveals himself to us; how he makes himself known to you. It's how he unwraps the mystery of how things came to be, why there is life, what is our purpose. In verse 3, we see that through the Word all things were made, in fact nothing would be here without him. In this Word there is life itself and **that life was the light of all mankind.** And because he created all things, he had a specific purpose and intention for these created things. Think of how when an engineer builds something, he has an intended purpose. When an architect sketches a building, she doesn't draw an empty box. She designs the building to have a specific purpose and function it would fulfill. When all things were created through and by the Word, there was a specific purpose for his creation. It was to love God, give him glory, and to serve one other. Mankind was the crown of that Creation formed from the dust of the ground in the image of God with the Word breathing life into him! It was good; it was perfect.

But after some time, a different darkness came because what God designed his people to do, they didn't. Instead of loving God, they loved themselves and wanted to be like God knowing good and evil. Instead of giving glory to God with their actions, they wanted to glorify themselves looking to improve on God's design. Instead of serving each other—their neighbor and creation—we see selfish me stepping to the pedestal. With a bite of a fruit how quickly everything changed. Consequences were immediate. Relationships were ruined. Blame was thrown around to everyone including God! The victim was the individual: me. "You put the wrong person with me, you put this snake here with me; it's not my fault."

But God rightly and justly shows the truth. It was you, Adam. It was you, Eve. You took the fruit. You went against my design. You had the chance and you failed. You sinned. And all creation was plunged into the darkness of sin. Death comes to all because all sin. Sin so thoroughly and completely corrupts we are dead in our transgressions and sins. Darkness and sin is what we are by nature.

This isn't news to you. Turn on the news or go online there's usually at least one headline of some horrible, sickening act that is committed. We see the darkness in nature with floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and fires that mercilessly destroy homes and lives. We see the darkness when we hear about wars overseas or the problems in our own country. We see it with the failing war against drugs and alcoholism that's all too close to home.

But it's not just out there. You wouldn't have to be encouraged to look at the bright side of life if there wasn't darkness threatening you. Darkness of an uncertain future can keep you up at night. There's darkness in our relationships...close friends no longer talk to you as much...family doesn't always get along; instead, fighting and discontent becomes the new norm. Marriages too often are strained. Children won't listen and you are wits end while mom and dad just don't seem to get it (this struggling dynamic continues all the way through our lives too!). There's the deep darkness of continued struggle with sin...the same fight against the same addiction to the point where it seems that every time you take one step forward, the next time it feels like you took three back.

It's so easy to say that "we" need to put Christ back into Christmas. It's easier to keep it general that as a group, people, society, and world we need to do better at this. But, what about me, you personally? Because it's not just other people's sin that hurts your relationship, it's your love for yourself. It's not other people's problems and struggles forcing you to act, it's you. It's not just other people's sinful actions that wear you down, it's you. God's Law shows us the darkness isn't just out there; it's you. We need God's Law to show us this truth because in the darkness of our sin we look for any excuse possible to pass the blame to anyone else. We are so blinded that we don't want to see the problem is me and left to myself I would be would lost in darkness. We don't want to admit that I need to be saved by someone else.

But in this darkness of sin and this world, a light shines that cannot be overcome. It pierces the darkness of unbelief and gives sight to our eyes blinded with sin. When the time had fully come, God sent his Son. John writes in v.14, "**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**" The willing servant came, born of a virgin mother so there is no question where Jesus comes from and who his Father is. The Word who is true God—outside of time and space—places himself within time and takes up space becoming true Man. As true Man he lives under that burden of God's Law so that you

might be bought back—that is redeemed—from the Law that only accuses and always kills. But he did not stop being 100% God and because he is true God, the Word, that is Jesus, kept the Law perfectly so that he would be your brother and you would be called God's child.

The Word becoming flesh—100% true God and 100% true Man—what a mystery. But almost more mysterious is why did he want to? Quite simply, it's grace. It's his love. It doesn't make sense; but it's true. Yes, God so loved the world he sent his Son. Yes, God wants all people to be saved. But don't forget that Jesus was born for you personally. Those same small baby feet would eventually be pierced for your sins. Those tiny hands that tightly gripped his mother and Joseph's fingers would be spread out wide when he would be crucified and crushed for you. The back softly rubbed to soothe the baby boy would be beaten and punished to give you peace. That baby Jesus would grow and live under God's law for you...he would die for you...he rose for you...and Jesus forgives you all your sin.

It's that same Jesus, the Word who became flesh, who knows your struggles. If you say, "Do you know what it's like to face endless temptation?" Jesus says, "I do; I was tempted in every way." If you say, "Do you know what it's like to be so scared and filled with fear that you can barely function," Jesus points us to Gethsemane where he sweat drops of blood and says, "I do." If you say, "God, you can't know what it's like to have family and friends let you down again and again," Jesus points to his family and friends and his disciples and says, "But, I do." Even if you say, "Jesus you can't know what it's like to feel like God is against you...that he has abandoned you." Jesus can reply, "I understand it better than you, because the Father has promised that you would never leave or forsake you. But when I was on the cross paying for your sins, he abandoned me." But Jesus never holds this against you; it's for that reason the Word became flesh. No one forced him or made him. He could have stopped at any moment. Instead, he chose to do it all for you and he forgives you! That same Jesus knows the good times and he knows the bad times promising that he is with you always full of grace and truth. That same Word that came and dwelled physically among his people continues to dwell with us today. The Word comes to you in the Bible where God speaks to you and strengthens you. He comes to you in a physical way in the Lord's Supper where you receive His body and blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins. And with sins forgiven again, you are invited to depart in peace because God's favor rests on you.

In the darkness of this world, there's a light that cannot be overcome. He is the Word who became flesh for you. He is Jesus, the Savior who is born to you. He is Christ the Lord. Amen.