

## John's Version of Christmas 12/30/18

Sunday after Christmas: Isaiah 61:10- 62:3; John 1:1-18

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Our readings about the birth of Jesus from Matthew, Mark and Luke, during the last part of the season of Advent and for Christmas Eve, have reminded us of all the familiar stories about Mary and Elizabeth, and Joseph, about the shepherds seeing and hearing the angels, about the wisemen seeing and following the star, and about the birth of Jesus in a barn and being placed as a babe in a manger.

We love these stories about Christ being brought into our world, and being one of us. They are stories we have connected with since we were kids. They are stories that connect us in **tangible** ways with our God and with Jesus.

But John has a very different version of the story of Jesus, and the story of Jesus' "birth," which we read this morning and we read every year, the Sunday after Christmas. "In the beginning," before the World, before anything existed, "was the **Word**." "The Word was with God" and the Word "was God." "All things came into being through" the Word. All creation. What came into being through the Word was "**Life**," and "the Life was the '**Light**' of all people." Without the Word there would be no World, there would be no Life, there would be no Light to overcome the darkness.

John the Baptist "came as a witness to testify to the **light**;" "the true light, which **enlightens** everyone, was coming into the world."

The same "**Word**" from the beginning, which created all the World, which created Light and Life, according to John, became "flesh and lived among us."

Why didn't John tell the same Christmas story in his Gospel as the version in Luke and Mark and Matthew? John's message is that **Christ**, the being who appeared in the form of Jesus, was so much bigger than the baby born in the manger, or the young carpenter, or the one who gathered a team of followers, healed the sick, preached the Word, and was ultimately crucified and resurrected.

Why did the **Word**, the **Creator** of all the World, of all beings, the source of **Light** and **Life** have to be born into a manger, and be raised as a carpenter, and become the leader of a group of devoted followers, and ultimately have to be arrested, beaten and crucified? I think it's because we, as humans, needed something we could **hold on to**; something we could **see** and **touch**, and **hear**, and **understand**; if we were ever going to connect on a deeply **personal** level with God.

But John, in his Gospel introduction, reminds us that we **also** have to recognize and acknowledge that the **Word**, that **Christ**, is so much bigger than the human Jesus. God is so much bigger than Jesus. We can't see God or Christ simply through a human lens. God is not

limited by flesh or by time. We have to realize that God came to us as a human “metaphor” so that we could **connect** on a much more intimate and personal level than we would ever be able to connect to the **Word**, the **Creator**, the source of **Life**. **And**, our God will never be limited to the child in the manger, the human Jesus.

From my perspective, this is one of the great challenges of Christianity. It is so much easier if we can see and know Jesus primarily through a **human lens**. The more literally we can imagine Jesus as God, the more we can see God through a human lens – Like a human God with a human gender, God is a male, right?

We, as Christians, can easily lose the reality that God and Christ are so much bigger than anything we will ever get our heads around. That reality needs to be part of our worship, and our relationship with God, so that we can hold on to, connect with, that reality, that Christ is so much bigger than Jesus.

John tells many practical human stories about Jesus. But he begins by telling us that the human Jesus is also the **Word**, the **Light**, the **Creator** of all. That the God who appeared to us in the form of Jesus, is much bigger than anything we could ever get our heads around.

So what’s the point of this sermon? I’m not sure, but here’s what I think it is about. If we want to really, truly know and connect with God; if we want to truly know God the Creator, the source of Life and Light, we have to know the Jesus born in the manger, the carpenter, the leader of the disciples, the healer, the one who was crucified and who rose from the dead. **And** we also have to know a “Jesus” or a “Christ” who is much bigger than the baby in the manger, or the leader of the disciples, or the Jesus who was crucified.

According to John, the Christ born in the manger is also the source of the beginning of humanity, of the Earth, of the World. Does that make sense? No it doesn’t. God, the **Word**, **Jesus** is bigger than anything we can ever get our heads around. The only way John could describe God, and describe the Christ who was born in the manger, was with a series of metaphors: **Word, Life, Light, Creator**.

We can’t take these words literally. They are words that, when used together, to describe Christ, Jesus remind us that Christ, Jesus, is bigger than anything we can ever get our heads around.

I guess the reason we read and preach about chapter one of John’s Gospel, the Sunday after Christmas, is to remind us that our Lord and Savior, who was born in a manger and died on a cross and was resurrected, is so much bigger than the baby in the manger, than the person, Jesus. And that Jesus came to introduce us to and connect us, on a **human** level, with the **Word**, the **Light**, the **Creator** of all.

Something we will never get our heads around. Amen.