

John 1:1-18

2nd Sunday of Christmas

Jan. 2, 2000

A word.

A sound passing from speaker to hearer that carries meaning.

Stop.

Go.

Empty.

Full.

All words and as I send them and you receive them you may know what I intend.

But sometimes a word is not enough. Stop what? Go where? What is empty? Who is full?

The word is God. God is a small word. Three letters. A first grader can read the word God. But how many words would it take to explain God, to make God clear. Some of us learned some explaining God words – words like omniscient, and omnipotent and omnipresent. These words are a way of saying there is no container that can hold God – boundaries that can restrict God. Once when God was asked to name God God said, I am what I am – I will be what I will be. But I want a name so I can say what God can do and what God cannot do. Give me a name for God like eternal so that I know God could never die. I want a name for God like almighty so that I know God could never be weak. I want a name for God like omnipresent – everywhere all at once – so that I know God could never be boxed up in one little place.

But how many words would it take to say God completely, to really say God? A hundred, a thousand, a million? Or one.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people.

The word? What word? What word has the power to cause a tree to burst into being – a rock to be born out of nothingness, a sun to explode with light? What word has life in it – that by being spoken can call ants into their scurrying and lions into their prowling and people into their plotting and planning and procrastinating? What word can take an empty nothingness and fill it up with a universe? The word that was in the beginning, the word that was with God, the word that was God – is God: in the beginning and at the end and in every moment in between.

But in a moment of time the word that is God did what our words about God say could never be done: The word became flesh and lived among us. Not dressed up in flesh like a special outfit of clothing to be worn and then discarded but became flesh – the very way you are flesh and I am flesh. Almighty and omnipresent and omnipotent became as soft as a baby's skull, as fragile as a baby's spine, as small and as needy as a newborn.

The word became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

I think of glory and light comes to mind – intense, blinding light. But the word that became flesh did not radiate light except for a moment on the mountain of transfiguration. Instead he healed the sick, gave despairing ones new hope, dead and in the grave ones new life. He entered every darkness in your life – even into your grave to be light for you there. He promises his light will be greater than any darkness, the darkness of your sins, your failings, your unfaithfulness. When you have no hope for tomorrow he will be your hope.

Full of grace – full of truth.

Sometimes we tell one another what we want to hear. But the word that became flesh is full of truth. Not a veneer hiding what is inside – pretty and enticing on the outside on but masking a different reality within. No, the word that became flesh is truth and grace through and through – he is a word with no fine print – no tasty morsel concealing a hook with which God will catch you. Full of grace – love upon love upon love and full of truth.

There is one word for God that we will speak, Jesus. All our other words are words for what God might be or could be or should be. But when you say Jesus you speak the word that God is: your brother, your savior, your friend.