

Flesh, Light, and Life ... for You

2nd Sun. after Christmas – 01/02/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 1:1-18 Pastor Keith Besel

vv.4-5, [John says of Jesus who came as God in the flesh,] **“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”**

Introduction

- ⊗ So everyone – have you got your flesh with you today? Of course you do. Many people would say that our flesh is what makes us who we are. By definition, flesh is our “covering”; the part of our body that’s primarily skin and muscle and fat that covers over our bones and internal organs.
 - ➔ Though it is the superficial or outside covering of our bodies, it is a part of everything that we do; when we are laboring at work or school, struggling with problems at home, recovering in the hospital, weeping at the graveside or worshipping here before this altar.
 - ➔ Still in the grand scheme of things our flesh is rather weak and vulnerable. It cuts and scrapes easily, is subject to exposure from the elements like sun, water, cold, fire or heat and yet it is so much a miraculous creation from God.
- ⊗ And, we’ve become so comfortable in our flesh that we don’t give it much thought, until a day like today when we hear verse 14 of our text tell us that Jesus, the second person in the one Triune God, as the Word who was with God and is God Himself (v.1), “became flesh and tented among us” here in this earthly existence.
 - ➔ That’s what we celebrate especially now in the Christmas season, that Jesus came as our Immanuel – God with us. But even as we know that He ascended into heaven in the His flesh, nonetheless John tells us in our Gospel Reading that the Word continues to become flesh and live among us still today; bringing us light and life.
 - ➔ Flesh, Light and Life ... tenting right here in our midst – that’s the wonderful mystery of our Christian faith. And the joy of it all is that the very same Flesh, Light, and Life that is our Savior, is so ... for you! Right here! Right now!
 - ➔ Let’s see what John has to teach us about each of those important characteristics of Jesus.

I. Flesh: God became flesh (v 14).

- ⊗ First of all, flesh. Paul shows us just how mind-boggling this truth is that God became human flesh in the person of Jesus. He says in 1 Timothy 3:16, “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.
 - ➔ John is clear in verses 1-3 of our Gospel Reading that He was “the Word” “in the beginning”, before the creation of time and all that you and I know as the universe. Verse two shows us that “the Word” is a “He” – a particular person.
 - ➔ All of Creation comes into existence by the proclamation of His Word. Genesis 1:3 says for example that He “said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light”. So, “Without Him was not any thing made that was made” (v.3).
 - ➔ Jesus has a claim on all creation; it bears His stamp.
- ⊗ And yet, we know that this God who is above all that is created, found it necessary and desirable to humble Himself to the point of being miraculously conceived in the womb of a young woman and then to undergo the natural order of being born of a virgin.

- The term in verse 14 that talks about Jesus taking on human flesh, which includes not only the superficial of course, but an entire human existence with tissue and organs; emotions and rational thinking – that term in the Greek is σκηνώω (skano-o), which means “to put up and live/dwell in a tent”.
- The root of this comes from the way that God, in the Old Testament, promised to be with His people in a physical way through the command that they build the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant as the earthly throne of God. The purpose of the Tabernacle, which was a fabric tent, was to provide a place where the people could gather to worship God and bring their body and blood sacrifices to pay for their sins.
- ✘ Well, that was the model; the illustration. Now in Jesus the eternal God takes on flesh – in the form of a baby – with a body and blood for sacrifice in mind. Why? Because this fallen, darkened, dead creation has succumbed to sin – so much so that we human creatures are unable to overcome the power of evil and death that has taken hold here.
 - Jesus teaches this truth about Himself in John 2:19-22 when He says to the Jews, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” and then we are told, “He was speaking about the temple of His body”.
- ✘ So, in verses 6-8, 15 we’re told that God sent an eye witness to all of this, whom we call John the Baptizer. But now the author of our text, the other John; John the evangelist, is the one who wrote in 1 John 1:1 that Jesus is, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands...”
 - Verse 14 continues, “...we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”. This fleshly baby in the manger; this man pierced and bleeding on the cross is one with God the Father! He’s God! What mystery! What scandal! What salvation! According to verse 7 both Johns have given us their eye witness testimony to this truth, why? so that “all (people) might believe through Him”.

II. Jesus – the light, shining in our darkness.

- ✘ But in the “darkness” of our sin you and I cannot understand it. Verse 10 says that even as “He was in the world” that He made, “the world did not know Him”. Even worse verse 11 shows us the result of the darkness of that unbelief, that His very own people – the ones who should have seen all of the signs and promises of God fulfilled in Jesus, “did not receive Him”.
 - Jesus gave God’s judgment for this unbelief to Nicodemus in John 3:19 when He said, “This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil”. It is a judgment that still applies to the darkness of unbelief today; to those who refuse to acknowledge and submit to Jesus as Son of God and Savior of souls.
- ✘ This is the darkness that clouds so many souls still today – the desire to be our own god; to be in control of our own destiny and light and truth. But just as there’s only one God who said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3) in the beginning, so the very same one-and-only true God is the one who sent His Son as the only “true light” according to verse 9, “which enlightens everyone”.
 - In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”.
- ✘ Why do you and I and all people need Jesus as “the light of the world”? because throughout Scripture the idea of darkness and light is used to help us all understand the seriousness of our sin in this evil world, in contrast with the saving power and glory of Jesus, who came as God in the flesh to save us.

- Darkness is this world which has fallen under the influence of sin. The Bible says that sinful human beings are blind, dead, enemies of God. When Jesus was being arrested in Luke 22:53 He said to the Jews who were supposed to be God's people that "this is your hour, and the power of darkness".
- The darkness of unbelief; of sinful desire deceives people into thinking that they have power when in reality they do not. Those Jews fell prey to Satan's dark delusion that they could regain control over God and their existence by snuffing out "the Light of the World" – putting an end to Jesus' life.
- ⊗ But as we talked about with the children earlier, darkness ultimately has no power over light. If there is any light at all, then darkness cannot "overcome it" (v.5).
 - So when Jesus, who is the author and source of light came into this world on Christmas, He became "The Light of the World"; His power and ability to overcome and dispel the darkness of sin and evil; to squash the "Prince of Darkness" – Satan had now come to light as He fulfilled the Father's salvation plan.
 - The world even tried to hide Jesus, as the Light, in a deep dark tomb. But as we know, on Easter Christ's true power burst forth in the radiance of His victory over sin, death and devil for you and me and all mankind.
- ⊗ In verses 12-13 John alludes to the manner of how Jesus shines into your soul and mine. He says, "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God".
 - That is Baptism-talk right there; referring to how you and I, in Baptism, have been "adopted" and "chosen" in Jesus as our Epistle Reading today talks about, "before the creation of the world" (Eph. 1:3-5).
- ⊗ Even as Jesus overcame the darkness of sin and Satan 2000 years ago at the cross and in His resurrection, He is still the "fleshly" remedy to darkness in your life and my life now today. He gave us this promise in John 12:46, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness".
 - "No one who believes" in Jesus "should stay in darkness" – that is such a comforting and powerful promise isn't it? When you feel the temptations of this world trying to drag you away from Jesus and His light; when you wrestle with doubt or come face to face with people who are trying to influence you to get you to do and think and say things that are not what God has given us in His Word.
 - So, when that temptation to drink too much or use some other substance darkens your door; when things like pornography or gambling or foul language or excuses to miss worship or dishonest speech or laziness at work or dishonoring God's intentions for marriage or speaking in a manner that harms another person's reputation – when any of these or other sinful thoughts get a hold of you, how do you get out of and turn from the darkness? You turn on the Light of Christ. You say a pray asking Jesus to help you or call a Christian friend for encouragement or tap into the Holy Spirit's power in your baptism to turn away and refuse to live in that darkness. You plug into God's power sources for light – His Word, His gifts in Worship of Holy Communion and Baptism, and the mutual conversation and support of God's family here in His Church.

III. Life – Jesus as the source of life.

- ⊗ The final truth for us to consider today about Jesus is that He is the very source and power for giving and sustaining life. Verse four says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men".

- It sounds like a contradiction to hear this and also know, as we said earlier, that Jesus became flesh for the express purpose of giving up His life on the cross to die.
- ✘ But it's not a contraction at all. It is what we would call a "paradox" – which is something that only seems absurd or self-contradictory on the surface but in reality expresses a deeper truth.
 - The Father gave us the gift of His Son to die because that was the only way that the required penalty for our sins could be paid. And once it was, He won the victory of life for us all. This is why we rejoice at Christmas!
 - It's as verse 16 says – part of the "fullness" of Jesus' love for us all is that in His birth and coming to us in the flesh "we have all received grace upon grace". God pours His love and saving power; His wonderful gifts upon us over and over again, more and more, even when we do not deserve any of them.
- ✘ And a big expression of His grace is that God sent us His Son to become one of us; to die for us; so that we might have eternal life with Him!
 - How great is the mystery of our faith!

Conclusion

- ✘ Verses 17-18 close out our text by highlighting this truth for us in what appears to be a contrast that pits Moses against Jesus. But if that were so, than God would be telling us that there is nothing good in the Old Testament; that it is no longer His Word of truth – which Jesus soundly speaks against us doing.
 - It says, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known."
 - The key to the meaning here is found in two words – "given" and "came". God is the one who "gave" His Word of Law "through Moses". That means that Moses served as God's instrument for delivering God's gift to mankind. But then when it talks about Jesus there is no talk of Jesus being an instrument like Moses was. The original Greek says that "grace and truth came into existence (ἐγένετο) through Jesus Christ".
- ✘ You see, Jesus as God's Word in the flesh IS grace and truth. Jesus IS the gift itself! Not just the delivery boy. Jesus IS the Light that overcomes the darkness of sin and He IS our life and salvation!
 - And the final verse teaches us that Jesus IS the final revelation from God. He came into this world to save us, and today He still comes and reveals God's salvation plan to us as the Word in the flesh.
 - Yes, Jesus fulfills the plan and Jesus completes the plan because Jesus IS the plan by which you and I have the assurance of our own resurrected flesh in eternal life, where we will bask in the light of God's glory in heaven. All of this is yours and mine because of Jesus! Amen.