

Intro:

Our Christmas series is called “*The Word made Flesh*”. In this series we have been making much of God’s *revelation* of himself to man.

1. The Revelation of God’s Power and Divine Authority through the things that he has made: General Revelation
2. The Revelation of God’s Gracious Condescension towards Men through the access revealed in the spoken / written word: Special Revelation (the Bible)

We made much of the value of God’s spoken Word – by it we are transformed, made new, guided, and put into a living relationship with the Living God.

Today we are at the pinnacle of our Christmas series – we are going to look at God’s final message to man:

- No longer simply by the natural revelation that comes through a right understanding of the things we can see (the things God made)
- No longer merely by the special revelation that comes through the mouths of the prophets as they are moved by the Spirit of God
- But finally, a new revelation... the speech of God that is made by his sending into the world His Own Son:

The Word became Flesh

It is this last revelation of God to man that we celebrate at Christmas. All our Christmas carols extol the idea of God becoming man.

The theological term for this is *incarnation*: the Word of God becoming flesh, appearing before human eyes.

John spoke of him in his first epistle this way:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (1 Jn 1.1)

In Hebrews, as we read earlier in the service, the apostle says that

God ... spake in time past ... by the prophets (Heb 1.1)

[Special Revelation]

God ... has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son (Heb 1.2)

[Personal Revelation]

This final revelation, this personal revelation, spoken by God to us in the person of His Son, **is the revelation of God that gives final meaning and power to all the rest.**

That is what we finally come to understand when we come to the message of the Gospel: God has spoken to us in his Son. The Word became Flesh.

Now the Word of Creation becomes Personal.

Now the Word of the prophets becomes Powerful.

That is what John is getting at in his meditation on the Word which forms the prologue of his Gospel and gives us the text and the theme for our series this Christmas.

Read Jn 1.1-18, text v. 14

Proposition: God's speech to us (his revelation) demands a personal involvement with God as revealed in One Person.

I. The idea of 'word'

A. Meaning of 'word'

1. Note regarding our point 'the idea of word'
 - a. Not 'the idea of *a* word'
 - b. Not 'the idea of *the* word'
 - c. But 'the idea of word'
2. Dictionary definition : "A speech sound or series of speech sounds that symbolizes and communicates a meaning usu. without being divisible into smaller units capable of independent use"¹

The word 'table' = the single smallest unit describing a certain object in its various forms and parts.

- I can point to a table in our fellowship room, call it a 'table' and you all understand what I mean.
- I can speak about an object in my dining room, call it a 'table' and you all understand what I mean – even though it's form is slightly different from the tables in the fellowship room
- If I point to the floor, and say 'table', a whole lot of confusion ensues, because the floor is something entirely different from a table in normal understanding

¹ Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

So: a word is an irreducible unit of speech which communicates a meaning about something.

3. Theological definition – the word ‘Word’ capitalized as here in our text: “the expressed or manifested mind and will of God”²

B. The Word of God

1. The Word in the heavens: an expression or manifestation of the mind and will of God as *discerned* in God’s creative deeds (Ps 19.1-2)
2. The Word in the Law: an expression or manifestation of the mind and will of God as *received* from God’s inspired prophets (Ps 19.7)
3. The Word in the Son: an expression or manifestation of the mind and will of God as *seen* in a Person (in God’s own Son made flesh)
 - a. There is much speech here, encapsulated in one person
 - b. There is a great Mind here, represented by one person
 - c. There is an eternal will here, expressed by one person
 - d. There is an incomprehensible relationship here, revealed through one person

All the thought, heart, mind, will, feeling, intentions... all that God’s mind could express is expressed completely in this one Person.

I recently finished reading again J. R. R. Tolkien’s books, *The Lord of the Rings*. In that set of books, there is a character called Treebeard – he is an *ent*, a huge imaginary “tree creature”, sort of a talking tree, who is said to be very old. He is asked his name and says this:

- “I am not going to tell you *my* name, not yet at any rate. ... For one thing it would take a long while: my name is growing all the time, and I’ve lived a very long, long time; so *my* name is like a story. Real names tell you the story of the things they belong to in my language ... It is a lovely language, but it takes a very long time to say anything in it...”

² *Ibid.*

- Treebeard thinks the other characters are ‘hasty’ folks because they have very short names.
- That sort of represents what the Son is to God – we say his name, Jesus Christ – but what does that mean? What does it represent?

The name means the whole thought, heart, mind, will, feeling, intentions from eternity past to eternity future, speaking the mind of God to man in the immediate present.

- All you need to know about God is spoken to you in His Son.

II. The incarnation of the Word

A. The Word is not merely some high theological concept, divorced from the world in which we live

1. The concepts expressed in Jn 1.1-3 could be considered as merely ‘high theology’
 - a. The eternal word
 - b. The eternal distinction from God
 - c. The eternal quality as God
 - d. The eternal existence with God (2)
 - e. The exclusive activity of God as Creator (3)
2. These high theological concepts are present in speaking of ‘the Word’ – but the text continues beyond this point

B. The Word (all those things of v. 1-3) *became flesh* (14)

1. What this means biologically (Luke 1.30-37)
 - a. Mary, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son
 - 1) A literal, human child
 - 2) A profoundly blessed child (see angel’s prophecy in vv. 32-33)
 - b. Mary’s question: “How?” (34)

- c. Answer: power of the Spirit will overshadow you (35-37)
- 1) The Spirit will 'speak' to the cell in the womb
 - 2) The impossible will be possible: God will cause that which cannot be to be
 - 3) God will speak into existence a new life

And so the new creation begins in the person of a literal, real man – like all other men, but unlike all other men – the Word of God

2. What this means theologically

- a. He didn't just take on humanity as one would put on a coat only to lay it aside later: he became flesh (not 'a man', but 'man')
- b. He became a complete man – all that is part of human nature was spoken into existence in the union of natures in one Person
- c. He became a constant man – the Son of God, the man Jesus, sits enthroned in heaven today
- d. He became a very man while remaining a very God: no new category was created
- e. He is one Person who existed as one Person from eternity ('he was with God' 1.1) and is that same Person as an incarnated man – 'in-fleshed'

We cannot exhaust all that this means – and cannot completely understand all that this means.

- But at least this one thing you do need to understand: Jesus is the most significant person of all history – your eternal destiny depends on correctly hearing the revelation God *is* making through Him. [Note the 'is'.]

III. The issues of the Word

A. What we mean by 'issues' — essential content

1. His glory as the only begotten

- a. Some are confused as to this term – thinking that it refers to someone who isn't eternal, who has a beginning

b. Significant usages of the term:

- 1) Widow of Nain's 'only' son (Lk 7.12)
- 2) Jairus' only daughter (Lk 8.42)
- 3) Isaac, Abraham's *unique* son, not his only son (Heb 11.17)

c. Only begotten = the unique representation of God

d. We (the apostles) beheld His glory

- 1) What glory?
- 2) His glory as it is:

The glory of the unique representation from the Father, appearing in the form of God incarnate, the Word become flesh

2. His glory as full of grace and truth

- a. The Word of Creation speaks Judgement to us
- b. The Word of Law speaks Perfection to us
- c. The Word in Flesh speaks Grace to us as Sinners
 - 1) You are a Sinner
 - 2) You cannot save yourself
 - 3) You must have a substitute

The Divine Eternal Son of God 'incarnated' himself in order that as man he could suffer eternally your penalty for sin and offer you as God His eternal life so that you as a sinner could live forever with God in heaven.

B. What these issues demand — personal commitment

1. Yield yourself to him
2. Confess your sin to him
3. Make your allegiance to him
4. Live your life in faith henceforth for him

The Word became flesh...

Conclusion:

One of my commentator's calls this verse "one short, shattering expression"³ — all our faith as Christians rests on this understanding of who Christ is.

- No 'fairy story' of a romantic fable we celebrate at this time every year...
- No 'inspirational testimony' of some religious figure to inspire us...

But the shattering realization that the eternal God became flesh in order to reveal the *whole* of God's mind and will to us in one person, His Glorious Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

“Light looked down and beheld Darkness.

‘Thither will I go,’ said Light.

Peace looked down and beheld War.

‘Thither will I go,’ said Peace.

Love looked down and beheld Hatred.

‘Thither will I go,’ said Love.

So came Light and shone.

So came Peace and gave rest.

So came Love and brought life.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”⁴

Is this Word your God?

³ Morris, p. 102

⁴ Laurence Houseman quoted in Morris, p. 102, footnote.