

Sermon for Christmas Day 2011 John 1:1-14 “Word”

We have heard the story of the birth of Jesus over these past weeks in incredible detail. We've heard of a long journey under less-than-ideal conditions, of stars and angels and shepherds. We've remembered the birth of the child in a stable. What more is there to say?

Word.

This is what John has to say. The start of his gospel doesn't tell a history. It doesn't talk about the baby, or the stable, or the angels singing on high.

No. It focuses on one thing: word. What are we supposed to do with that?

A few years ago, it became popular among the teens and young adult to say “word.” The Urban Dictionary says this usage means “Well said,” or “I am in agreement.”

If you said to your friend, “That dress that Janie is wearing is a horrible color for her,” your friend might respond, “Word!” It's true, that dress is wayyy too bright against her pale skin. Word!

Well, John's use of the word “Word” is not too far from that understanding.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

In other words, our starting point is God and the Word that is the expression of God.

A little difficult to understand, right? Word!

But imagine, if you will, God not as the old guy with the white robe and the long white beard – not Santa Claus, but God the Creator – but God as something like a formless, bodiless energy. God as free-floating wisdom. God as Word. God as affirmation of all that is good, all that is creative, all that is alive. Word!

That Word was always there, a beautiful powerful divine energy. That energy caused the world to be created – “all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.” This Word, this creative energy, did his work, and all was created, and all was light and life.

But how could we poor human beings understand something like this? How could we grasp something as ethereal, as incorporeal, as not concrete as this God-Who-Is-Word? There is no picture that can portray God-Who-Is-Word.

And so God-Who-Is-Word had an idea – he was, after all, essentially all idea, so this is no surprise. God-Who-Is-Word decided we human beings needed a way to understand how magnificently loving and caring God-Who-Is-Word truly is. So he decided to send himself to earth as God-Who-Is-Word, but also God who is Human. He sent his son, a human being like us, but also God-Who-Is-Word like him.

Perhaps this God-Who-Is-Word in human form could help us understand the marvel of God-Who-Is-Word in the heavenly realm.

If the three other Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – are about telling Jesus' story as a human baby born to a human woman in a difficult world, this gospel, this Gospel of John, is about telling Jesus' story as a divine being come down from heaven. It is about where and why Jesus came from. Yes, Jesus was human, but before he was human, he was part of the Godhead, and he was part of it always, for eternity.

And the beautiful thing is that Jesus is not only God come to earth, he is also the representation of God-Who-Is-Word continuing to exercise that creative energy. God-Who-Is-Word created the earth, but when Jesus comes, he re-creates the world with a new life, a new energy. He is not simply a representative sent to help us understand who God-

Who-Is-Word is, he is himself God-Who-Is-Word in human flesh, and he continues that work of creation by transforming us, redeeming us.

But what happens? John foreshadows the whole of Jesus' story by telling us that "he was in the world, and the world came into bring through him yet the world did not know him."

How could they know him, if they would turn away from him and cause his death?

But not all turned away. Some accepted him and his teachings. Some heard him and said "Word!" They came to know the God-Who-Is-Word, and became children of God-Who-Is-Word.

And the result of the presence of Jesus, that little baby that we have sung about, that creative man who was the only son of God-Who-Is-Word, was the best thing: glory.

Because of this Son of God-Who-Is-Word, John tells us "we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth."

Words have power. The young peoples' use of the exclamation "Word!" reminds us that there is nothing that carries so much power, so much creative energy. Words are full of possibilities. Jesus, who is the Word, opens our minds and hearts to the infinite possibilities of our lives and of what can happen through God-Who-Is-Word.

So today, on this day when we open gifts that we offer each other, we are reminded to remember that the most valuable gifts came to us not last night, not this morning, but over two thousand years ago. A baby, not gift-wrapped but aglow with that energy that is the Word made flesh. This is the gift, the Word made flesh who dwells among us, and we are surrounded by his glory. Word!

Amen.