

## **And the Word Became Flesh**

Christmas Eve 2007

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church

Pastor Jim Rueb

### **The Word became flesh**

John 1:1-14 is our fifth and final reading for this Christmas Eve. It's the great prologue to John's Gospel, and it contains what I believe is the single most important verse in the Bible: John 1:14.

*1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. 6There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 14The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

### **Flesh has become Word**

*And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.* I don't think it's far off the mark to say that we live in an age when this statement, "the Word became flesh" is actually being experienced in the reverse! It seems more like flesh is becoming word, or more specifically flesh is becoming an image. What were once in-person relationships are now becoming on-line transactions. What was once an often gracious if a bit urgent help from a sales person is now becoming just the price, and facts you can download for yourself on a website. What was once harmony discovered in the providence of initial personal encounter has now become e-harmony you find by comparing on-line self-assessments. Instead of the Word become flesh, flesh is becoming word; speech to text, text to speech in a symphony of an increasingly digital life played on a keyboard and viewed on a screen.

### **It's no wonder...**

It's no wonder that, even if you had the foresight to purchase Apple when it was hovering around \$30, or Google, or U Tube when it was just the dream of a few kids in torn jeans, things don't feel quite right about the world and about life. It's no wonder that with all the enhanced connectivity, we feel less connected than ever. It's no wonder that for all the self-knowledge and proliferation of do-it-yourself, *by your self, for yourself* spirituality many are more uncertain about God than ever.

### **Clinging to the Rolodex**

An article in the Wall Street Journal in the weekend edition a few weeks ago caught my eye. The title of the story was "Clinging to the Rolodex." The graphic on the front page depicted a man in a business suit barely hanging onto the spherical side of giant Rolodex by one of the tabbed cards. It vaguely resembled someone on the climbing wall at REI. The first paragraph tells the story: "Two computer monitors, two telephones, a Blackberry sit in the office of Jose W. Fernandez, a 52 year-old partner of law firm Latham & Watkins. Floor to ceiling windows reveal sprawling views of Manhattan, and the walls are adorned with Latin American art. But when

clients and colleagues stop by his office, Mr. Fernandez says, “The only thing people notice is that I still have a Rolodex.”

I smiled and thought, “He may not totally get why he wants to hang on to his Rolodex, but I suspect it’s because he still feels the need to be connected to the people in his network. Why? Because, at the end of the day, that’s what they are—*people!* And the flesh-made (merely) word, or in this case flesh made just a contact point on a network, doesn’t really tell the story. A story, as it turns out, that literally cries to be heard!

### **God came to this “flesh became word” world**

It’s into this “flesh became word” world that God came! Personally. It’s what the birth of Christ is all about. It’s what Christmas is all about. You could say that God had tried the “flesh made word” approach. The Old Testament is filled with the Word of God. And they’re good words. Life-giving words. The Word of God.

I think we were all interested to learn that Vladimir Putin, Time magazine’s Man of the Year, reads the Bible, and keeps a copy on his airplane. The natural religious expectation is that flesh would become word. We expect to have a guidebook. And we do. Every religion in the world has a book. The Word become *words*. But in one of Guidebooks, we read something absolutely unique, utterly astonishing, completely unexpected, and totally unimaginable. We read in The Gospel of John 1:14 that the Word became *flesh*, and made his dwelling among us. Who’d ever dream, much less expect a dream like that would come true? But it is precisely that dream come true, the Word made flesh, God with us, Immanuel, that we celebrate this Christmas night!

### **For unto you**

The message of Christmas is that the Word became flesh is not just something to think about—though it engages the mind like no other single notion in the history of intellectual inquiry. The Word became flesh not just something to believe—though believing it with your mind is a critical element of the Christian faith. The Word made flesh is some *one* to receive. As the angels said to the shepherds that glorious night, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

You don’t have to go back to your flocks without Him. You don’t have to go back to the loneliness of this “flesh become world,” without Him. For on this night, and for this time, and for you personally, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace, that’s *amazing* grace, and truth, that’s *true* truth by which you can life with hope, purpose and joy, connected by the heart to the very heart of the living God.

No wonder the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill towards all!” It’s what the Word became flesh offers you personally this night!

### **Prayer**

*How silently, gracious God, how silently Your wondrous gift is given  
So You impart to human hearts the blessings of Your heaven  
No ear may hear Your coming, but in this world of sin  
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.*

*Find your way into our hearts this night, Lord Jesus.  
Turn on a light that can never be extinguished.  
Come close, Lord, in a relationship that can never be displaced  
In every heart, in every household, in every life, we pray  
Amen*