

John 1:1-14
Christmas Day 2022

Christmas sounds so simple. You get a day off of work. You give each other gifts to remember the gift that God gave to this world in Jesus on that first Christmas Eve. Families come together to sit around a meal enjoying the company of each other. It sounds simple. Yet, you and I know that Christmas can be far from simple. Think of the number of hours that you spent looking for the perfect gift for those who you love and for those close friends of you. Then you have to wrap them with the right colored paper. I'm amazed how easy some people can make the right folds on the paper as they wrap the gifts. I'm happy if I get close to making the right folds. Do you use bows? Ribbon? Or just a name tag? If you don't give the gift in person, then how do you ship it? Do you send it priority? Do you send it overnight? Or are you happy to just get it in the mail? Then there are the travel plans. Do you fly? Drive? Which side of the family are you going to spend Christmas Day or Christmas Eve? Christmas gets complicated really fast, doesn't it?

The words of John are simple: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."** But what happened on that first Christmas was far from simple. God had made a promise thousands of years earlier to the very first two people who lived on this earth. Those two people didn't listen to God's commands and sin entered into his perfect world. But God would not abandon his world. Instead he told them that he was going to save it. **"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law to receive those under law."**

If you would have walked past a stable in Bethlehem on that first Christmas night, would you have seen that little child lying in a manger God's greatest gift? Or would we look at that gift and think: "This is it? A baby in a barn? That's God's gift to this world?" It doesn't look like much at first. When you hear the account of the birth of Jesus, it is striking how unimportant it all seemed. I mean, Mary and Joseph were a couple of nobodies stuck with no place to stay. The narrative is so simple: She gave birth to her first born, a son, she wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger.

Yet, God's plan was not simple. It took thousands of years of planning. It began in the Garden of Eden and would end on a cross. His plan would include involve directing the history of this world so that **"when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."** (Gal. 4:4-5) His plan would include his one and only son being punished for all the sins of this world. When you look at this plan, you can only marvel at the God who planned it.

The God who created the world, came to live in this world. Lying in that manger was the all-powerful God of the universe who put the stars in their places and planets in their courses. Then God did the unthinkable: **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."** That in and of itself is really pretty incredible. But God wasn't done in just sending His Son to be born in a manger. He wasn't done in having His Son live among us. His mission and God's promise would not be complete until Jesus would die on a cross.

You see, God gave a lasting gift to solve a long-term problem. You know how this world at times seems broken? When loved ones get sick or accidents happen? It can feel like this world isn't running the way it's supposed to. Well, that feeling is spot on. Things are broken. But it's not just the world that's not right, it is also that you and me that are not right with that long-term problem is called sin. We cannot get rid of that problem on our own. You can try all you want, but it doesn't work.

And so, God stepped into history and gave us a Savior. A Savior who can take your guilt away. He gives us forgiveness. He gives us faith to trust in that promise of forgiveness. He gives you a promise -- *"I forgive you for it all. And I will remember your sin no more. No more guilt. No more sorrow. I put it all on my Son, so that you can be free. So that you can be mine, forever."* God wrapped himself in human flesh because one day this perfect gift would die. In fact, that's what made him the perfect gift.

What does this child bring to this world? He comes with **"grace"** and **"truth."** God came to this world to pour out his love – a love that would never end. God. He would do whatever it took to save this world. He would even give his Son for me, for you. It sounds so simple. But it is far from simple. In fact, it is hard to even wrap our minds these words of John. All our sins are forgiven. All our guilt is taken off our backs and put on the back of Jesus.

So, how much more Christmas do you have in you? How busy have you been in the last month? Has the entertaining, the parties, the food, the traveling, etc. just make you tired. Are you going to go home today and fall asleep watching the Packers play? Or, maybe you still have more Christmas in you. You haven't gotten enough of your eggnog fix yet. You still have more gifts to be opened. You still have more gifts to give yet. You can still have more parties ahead of you yet. Wherever you fall on that spectrum, one thing is true. Eventually, Christmas will come to an end. The wrapping paper will need to be picked up and tossed. The Christmas dishes will soon be packed up again. All the planning and preparation is done. The gifts are opened and given. As great as Christmas is, it will eventually come to an end. It will be time to move into the next celebration --- Valentine's Day.

Even though the day will come to an end, the gift that God gave to this world will not come to an end. You see, everything that we need to get through every up and down of life, is found in that baby lying in a manger in Bethlehem. God took on human flesh. He came to live with us so that someday we can live with him. May this message found in the Gospel of John bring you hope and peace. **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** May that gift that God has given to us be your greatest gift ever given to you. Amen.