

Christmas Day 2018
John 1:14

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, GLORY AS OF THE ONLY SON FROM THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

If they haven't arrived already, they probably will sometime later today. I'm talking about your family and your friends, your Christmas guests. Maybe they're only coming for dinner, so they will be at your house for a few hours. Others will be spending the night. Still others will stay for a few days and they will prove Poor Richard knew what he was talking about when he said, "Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days."

You're glad to see them, but these are the people who come and sit in your favorite chair, drink the last cup of coffee without bothering to brew a fresh pot, and leave their whiskers and toothpaste in the sink. But there is light at the end of the tunnel because, after three days or so, they will leave.

And then there is that Christmas Guest who arrived last night. He showed up when the shepherds were out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night. His mother wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and placed Him in a manger because there was no room for His family in the inn. And all of creation got pretty excited He was here; in fact, a multitude of the heavenly host appeared to proclaim His birth.

You are all excited He's here. Sunday, you came to hear the children proclaim His birth in word and song. Last night, you came to sing all those beloved hymns proclaiming His birth and you stayed up late celebrating. This morning, you got up early and came here to do it all over again. You are just so excited that Jesus is here.

Our Gospel tells us, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. Really? He dwelt among us, that is to say, He pitched His tent among us. He came to stay. That’s a wonderful thought as you think about the baby Jesus because babies are wonderful. They are so cute, so cuddly. And this baby has those radiant coming from His holy face.

That is because this baby is also very God of very God, the Word made flesh, which means He brings the Word of God to bear on your life. That’s not always so comfortable because the words He brings to bear on you are words like “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself. You shall have no other gods before me. Honor my name. Remember my day. Obey your parents. Do not murder. Do not lie. Do not gossip. Do not covet”.

That’s not very comfortable because you know as true God, He knows you when you’re sleeping; He knows you when you are awake; He knows if you’ve been bad or good, and you know you’ve been bad. You have not loved the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. You have loved your neighbor as yourself. You have not called upon His name, prayed, praised, and given thank, but trusted in lady luck. You have not honored your parents. When it comes to lusting, cheating, lying, gossiping, coveting; well, you have not listened to His Word and you have done what pleased you. This Baby is God and He brings His Word to bear upon your life. And it’s not like He’s going anywhere.

Like John says, He became flesh and pitched His tent. He dwells among us. It’s interesting when you look at the Greek because this word “tabernacled” is the same word often used in the Old Testament. Jesus tabernacled with us, just as God tabernacled among His people in the Old

Testament. Remember that? The Israelites were wandering in the wilderness and God commanded Moses to build a tabernacle, a tent of meeting. Inside that tabernacle was the ark of the covenant and when the tabernacle was ready, God's glory came and filled it and God was with Israel 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year. God was always with them, and they knew it because God showed Himself in the cloud by day and fire by night, in the sight of all Israel throughout all the days of their journey. Wherever Israel went, there the glory of the Lord went. There God went with them, because God pitched His tent with them, just like Jesus pitched His tent with you.

And hearing that, there is a part of us that is uncomfortable with that, especially if He is bringing His Word of LAW to bear upon us. But that's not all He comes to do. Remember, God tabernacled with Israel to be their salvation and their comfort. The Lord Jesus Christ has come to tabernacle with you to be your salvation, your comfort.

He came in a tent, but it was not a tent of canvas. He came and pitched His tent in flesh, your flesh. He was a human being in every way like you, except for sin. He didn't have any of His own sin, so He took on all your sin. He took it all upon Himself and carried it all the way to Calvary's cross, where He bled and died upon it, for all those times you failed to love God and failed to love your neighbor; all those times you broke the 10 Commandments. Jesus died for all of those sins. He bore the punishment that you deserved and He rose again the 3rd day, proving to you that all of your sins are forgiven by this Jesus who tabernacled among us.

Here's the thing about His tabernacling – it never ends. He is the Christmas Guest that never leaves. And what Good News that is for us.

Here and now, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, Jesus Christ is with you. With you in the Word; with you in the waters of your baptism; with you in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. This is His glory. This is His grace. It was His glory to bear all your sins upon His own body and be lifted up upon the tree of the cross. It was His grace that allowed Him to humble Himself to be born of a virgin and take your place to suffer the punishment and death you deserve.

And because He did do that, you are forgiven. And now, it's His glory and grace to be with you by means of Word and Sacrament. Each and every day, He brings to you the forgiveness, the life, and the salvation He won for you by His life, His death, and His resurrection.

That's the gifts He brings to you, because He is the Christmas Guest who never leaves.