

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025

*The Second Sunday of Christmas*

**Gospel Reading**

**John 1: [1-9] 10-18**

**The Word Became Flesh**

[1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.]

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.") <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

**Other Readings: Jeremiah 31.7-14**

**Psalm 147.13-21**

**Ephesians 1.3-14**

**Homily**

***"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."*** (John 1:14)

Here we are, almost at the end of Christmas for another year. The build-up seemed endless, the reality fleeting, and now it's all over. Society moves on to the next thing and hot cross buns and Cadbury's cream eggs will soon be in the shops!

If we are not careful, we can celebrate the Christmas story itself, 'The Birth of Christ', in a similarly perfunctory way. It is such a familiar story – the manger, the shepherds, angels and wise men – that we can forget that this baby grew up and did amazing things. Jesus didn't stay a baby in a stable for eternity. Today is a good opportunity to think about what really happened in that stable as well as how it forms part of a much bigger story.

We sometimes say that Christmas is for children and that's true, up to a point. But the story of Jesus' birth is not 'just' a children's story. It is a story told for all of us, one which has real significance for the whole of humanity.

This bigger story is uniquely encapsulated in the gospel reading today, 'The Prologue of John's gospel'. John tells the story of Jesus, 'The Word', and how, from the beginning of time, long before the manger in Bethlehem, this 'Word' was present in the creation of our world and us. The story of the Word is the story of Jesus.

Then John tells us that this Word 'became flesh'. The Word becoming flesh is the decisive event in creation history and therefore in human history. It changes forever God's relationship to humanity and therefore our relationship to God. So the Christmas story is a story about God. It is a story which redefines creation, life and salvation.

The Prologue goes on...

***"What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people."***

Jesus is the resilient light that shines and overcomes the darkness to bring us life in creation. He is placed in the very heart of human experience through the life and witness of a man named John, John the Baptist. The story of John, the messenger who brings good news, introduces faith and human response to the light. This is how the story of Jesus, the story of God's self-revelation, becomes part of human experience, at the very heart of who we are and the lives we live.

Jesus, through his birth, through his ministry of teaching and healing, and through his death and resurrection, makes God known to us because he is 'God with us', the 'Word made flesh'.

God chose, to reveal himself to us in Jesus, living among us in all our weakness, confusion and pain. God shows us that there can be a different and better way if we follow the example of his Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh.

This holds true for us today. Because Jesus dwells within the heart of each of us and God remains active in every part of our world through the power of his Holy Spirit, Jesus isn't remote and isolated. He continues to share our human experiences and emotions:

- Of knowing pain, joy, suffering and loss.
- Of love and grief and of bodily death.
- Of tears over the injustices, inequalities and the self-inflicted conflicts in our world.

In Jesus, God binds himself to the 'everydayness' of human experience. He is there in the ordinariness of our lives. He **is** relevant to the lives we live today when we choose to acknowledge his presence.

God is ever present waiting patiently to be let into each of our lives. We can all, if we choose too, become people in whom others today can see God's glory:

- People of forgiveness and truthfulness.
- People whose lives of loving dedication and self-sacrifice are directed at the needs of others.
- People of peace – where peace starts in our hearts and in our relationships with each other.

We can, in Jesus Christ, all live life to the full, life in all its abundance.

2024 was a difficult year in so many ways, but in a world where there is so much pain and tragedy there are always signs of hope to be found and sometimes, they arrive very unexpectedly. As we set out on this New Year, we can find our greatest hope in remembering that Jesus is God's precious gift, the gift of God's own presence with us, a gift of life and light, full of grace and truth, who in an act of self-sacrifice came to bring hope and to change the lives of all people.

Yours and mine too!

**Let us pray**

*Lord, we pray for you to purify our hearts,  
that they may be worthy to become your dwelling place.  
Help us never to fail to find room for you,  
but come and abide in us,  
that we may also abide in you,  
for at this time, you were born into the world for all people,  
and live and reign, King of kings and Lord of lords,  
now and forever.*

**Amen**

**Conversation Questions**

1. Do you still see Jesus as a resilient light that can overcome the darkness in our world today?
2. Is our church today full of people in whom others can see God's glory personified, as it was in Jesus himself?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

**Prayer**

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

**Collect of the day**

*Almighty God,  
in the birth of your Son  
you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word,  
and shown us the fullness of your love:  
help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love  
that we may know the fullness of his joy;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.*

*(or)*

*God our Father,  
in love you sent your Son  
that the world may have life:  
lead us to seek him among the outcast  
and to find him in those in need,  
for Jesus Christ's sake.*

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