

CHRISTMAS ISN'T OVER**John 1:1-14**

Intro: The big debate in our home every year is how long do we keep our Christmas decorations up? Because of my accident, Kathy had the lion's share of the decorating to do and, because of that, we didn't have them all up until much later. For that reason, and because Christmas in my home is to be celebrated until at least Epiphany, which is next Sunday, we will keep them up at least that long. We want to soak up the celebration of Jesus coming to humanity.

I was driving to the church on Thursday and I saw that one of our neighbors was taking down his Christmas lights already – just two days after Christmas day! It brought to mind this Babylon Bee headline.

Now, I haven't looked – but Kathy suggested that maybe, since they are now retired, they were going to be away for an extended period of time, and wanted to make sure the decorations were put away. But am I judging too harshly that it's too soon to be putting away the vestiges of Christmas joy?

You see people can barely contain their eagerness for Christmas and put their decorations up in October and are depressed on December 26. I see that as the problem with putting all your eggs in the December 25 basket. We celebrate Christ's coming that day and we anticipate it, but it's not about the day, it's about the coming. That's why, when you really consider it, CHRISTMAS ISN'T OVER! Here's why, **(Read John 1:1-14)**

This is God we're talking about. Yes, he was a helpless baby in a feed trough, but he was God carrying out God's plan for a dark world. Let's look at our text and see how. I'm going to do it by drawing the main points from verses 1 and 14 because they are integrally linked. Let me read them again together, one after the other: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (v. 1) 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. (v. 14).* I will take each verse and make them into couplets.

First . . .

In the beginning was the Word and the Word became flesh

- When Jesus came at Christmas it was far more than a point in time. Instead it was a continuation of God's creative plan and at the same time it was God's final Word. Jesus, God the Son, was present at the beginning of time because as God, he is eternal. He was there. Creation came from his mind as he was in community with his Father and with the Holy Spirit.
- Through him all things were made, but he entered humanity as a created being and as he fully identified with creation. He inhabited, physically, his own creation.
- John tells us, in him was life, and that life is the light of all humanity. Lionel Whiston says of this "*Jesus is the light by which men walk into a new dimension of being.*" Christmas meant that everything would change completely and for the better. Jesus came and humanity would never be the same. He is the light shining in the darkness – a beacon – a burst of brightness through black and gloom.
- This is God we are talking about! The next couplet is . . .

The Word was with God and the Word dwelt among us

- When I went to Kenya almost 7 years ago, my hosts had told me that if I got myself there, they would take care of my transportation, meals, and lodging while I was in the country. That was mostly true. They didn't deceive me, they just did not have the resources to be able to care for all of those obligations – and in the end I paid for many things during my time there – I really didn't mind – I just did it and it was worth it. God did great things for me and through me.
 - As I prepared to go to Kenya, my host, Ilam, asked if I would like to stay in a nearby hotel or would I like to stay in his home with him and his family? As I went there, I wanted at least two things: I wanted them to save money and I wanted to get the full experience of Kenya. Truthfully though, it was almost more than this wimpy North American had bargained for.
 - Ilam and Franciscah's home was a traditional mud home, with a tin roof that had been salvaged from somewhere else. I knew this because, as I sat inside, I could see sunlight through old nail holes from the tin's previous life on some other structure. Ilam also had not yet had time or money to put windows in the house so there was corrugated roofing tin over the places where windows would eventually go.

- Their home also had no electric. We were right on the equator so the sun came up at about 6 AM and set at about 6 PM. So as 6:00 came and went on my first evening there, I realized that I previously had no concept of what true darkness was. The family used little oil lamps to provide a dim light. Here is a photo of Ilam's oldest son, Ruben, as he studied his school work by lamplight – notice that you cannot see him, and it's not because his skin is brown – it's because it was DARK!
- There was also no running water. Water came from a 60 foot well Ilam had had dug in his yard a year or so before I got there. Bathing was sponge bath in a “bath room” using buckets of hot water Francisca had boiled over the cooking fire in the lean-to behind the house.
- It was rustic to say the least. On that first night as I sat in the gathering gloom of darkness, having just come in from the outhouse, and experiencing a splitting, **I NEED** caffeine headache – I thought, “What have I gotten myself into?!” But when I left almost two weeks later, I knew I would dearly miss that rustic setting. I had adapted, and quite well.
- I had not shared my misgivings with my Kenyan friends and they commented time after time about the fact that I would actually stay with them. Apparently that was not normal. Apparently previous visitors had required nicer accommodations. I chose not to, regretted it for a day or so and then grew to love it.
- Now, I am definitely not comparing myself to God the Son, but he left the glory of heaven to dwell among us!!!! The Word was with God and the Word dwelt among us! Do you get that?!!! That's why Jason and Lydia's song “Welcome to our World” is so poignant. Listen to the second verse:

*Hope that You don't mind our manger
How I wish we could have known
But long-awaited Holy Stranger
Make Yourself at home
Please make Yourself at home*

He did make himself at home. He didn't have to but he did. And he showed us how to live and love. Let that sink in. God, as a Man, dwelt among us. And the final couplet . . .

The Word was God and the Word was full of grace and truth

- And not only that, that word that is full of grace and truth, it was full of light and life. John tells us, *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* (vv. 4-5). This because it is not mere light, it is TRUE LIGHT. The very embodiment of truth. And his intention is for us to gather than light and pass it on. Remember, when you were a kid, those items (I remember in particular a cross I got at Easter), that, when you held them up to the light for a bit, and then turned out the lights, they would glow? That's how it is with being with Jesus – you soak up the light and pass it on. I work this into many of my sermons, don't I? Well, I'd not be doing my job as a pastor or as a fellow Christ Follower. If you are a disciple of Christ, you need to pass on the Good News. I like this truth that I ran across this past week – maybe one of you posted it on Facebook – I don't know, but it's spot on. People in this dark work need the light of Christ. It's up to us to light them up. That way when they take down their Christmas lights, they still have the true light of Christmas.
- F. B. Meyer writes “*When we receive Christ's life we shine.*” Shine ABC! Pastor Eric Reisen posted this the other day. Notice what is the most effective way to get people to church **YOU invite them!** If I invite them, it's good, and I should, but people will think its what I'm supposed to do – it was “what I'm paid to do.” But if you invite them, it carries a lot of weight. Think about that. In my Christmas devotional by Danny Saavedra, he prayed this prayer for his readers, and I pray it for you, “I pray that we who carry the presence of the Redeemer within us would shine Christ's light the brightest, so . . . *that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* Matthew 5:16.”

Conclusion: Because of God's perfect creative plan we are part a universe that was signed, sealed, delivered through his obedient Son. As we were reminded last week in those familiar words, *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16. He is the light and we have inherited that light. Let's pass on that light. A worship song by Bryan & Katie Torwalt says,

*When You walk into the room, everything changes
Darkness starts to tremble at the light that You bring
And when You walk into the room,
every heart starts burning
And nothing matters more than just
to sit here at Your feet and worship You*

Let's worship the Son, let's tell others about him. Let's tell others, CHRISTMAS IS NOT OVER. And here's why: it's never going to BE over. Amen.