

Pastor Jon's December 29, 2024 Sermon for Christmas 1

Based on John's Prologue, John 1:1-18

We are coming to the time of year where we look back on 2024, all the ups and downs, joys and sorrows, and try to make friends with it. Then we start looking forward to 2025. You may be one to make New Year's resolutions or set goals for the coming year. Maybe not. I find if I set a goal and let others know about it, like my spouse, Jeranna, I have a better chance of accomplishing that goal. We have been discussing this lately.

In our Gospel for today, John the evangelist, sets the goal for the rest of the Gospel and Jesus' mission on earth. It is known as the prologue. I like to refer to it as John's Christmas story... except there are no Mary and Joseph, no baby in a manger, no shepherds, angels or wisemen. Just this idea of the Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us... God putting on a human body.

In Greek literature, a **prologue** is an opening to a story that establishes the setting and gives pertinent background details... often some earlier story that ties into the main one. (pro) meaning before, and (logos) meaning word... before the word. The importance, therefore, of the prologue in Greek drama was very great... supplying just what was needed to make the succeeding scenes intelligible.

If you could write a prologue for 2025, what would it look like? What's your word before the word? What vocabulary would you use? What goals or ideas do you want to live into? Try writing a prologue for the coming year.

John's prologue... verses 1-18 is the word before the word. John uses certain vocabulary often. Life, Light, Darkness, Dwell, Know, World, Grace, Truth, and Believe. It sets the tone for the rest of the story. It gives useful and pertinent details and that will make the succeeding scenes more intelligible.

It starts off... In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. That same word was spoken

in creation in Genesis 1 when God spoke a word and ordered the watery chaos into life. This same Word will order the chaos in our lives and bring new life and light to all people. It will be a light that No darkness in our world can overcome.

But first people needed to get to know Jesus as the Word become flesh. This is what the incarnation is all about. How do you get to know someone? You spend time with them, you eat with them, you listen to them, you talk to them. This is what Jesus did.

In Jesus, God came to dwell with us... to literally pitch a tent with us. God took on a body, flesh, and blood... and our complicated relationships, our losses, our hardship, and our pain... our joy and our laughter. Jesus ate with friends and enemies. He touched the untouchable. He loved the unlovable. He went to a cross for us and for our salvation.

John writes, "Through his fullness we have all received grace upon grace."

In Jesus, we have entered the new era of Grace. John sums it up this way in verse 17, "The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." We no longer live under the shackles of the law of Moses to receive God's love and acceptance. It now comes through Christ's action on the cross and in the resurrection with no merit of our own. It is a gift of grace. All scripture is now to be read with Jesus in mind

And yet, many people rejected Jesus as their Lord and Messiah. And even today, people still reject Jesus. But you gotta get know him as the Word of God who became flesh, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest. And to those who believe in Jesus, he gave us power to become children of God, hope and eternal life. Jesus came so that all may have life and have it abundantly.

Dear church, will you join me in living into this prologue? Can we stand in the face of all the darkness in our world to proclaim Jesus, the Word made flesh, the light of the world who can overcome all darkness? Amen!