

**ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
27 DECEMBER 2020**

**READINGS: ISAIAH 61: 10=62:3// PSALM 148// GALATIANS 4:4-7//
JOHN 1:1-14**

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Let us pray

God of light and life, open our eyes as well as our ears that we may not only hear your Word today but might see your Word lived out fully in our lives in your world, through Christ our Lord who is the Light of the World. Amen

We are still in the season of Christmas and as I didn't have a chance to preach my sermon I have prepared for Christmas day I thought it is appropriate to share it with you this morning because it is the same gospel reading of Christmas day

Christmas 2020 was indeed a Christmas with a difference. There were not the usual hustle and buzzle in shopping malls. There were no pictures with Santa Claus. We at St Paul's did not have our usual Advent Carol service or Nine Lessons and Carols and no Crib Service and not even a midnight service but a Christmas Eve service. Church attendances are restricted. Families did not have their big family Christmas dinners and lunches. There are so many restrictions because of the COVID 19 pandemic People are despondent and not cheerful and happy with the usual twinkle in their eyes rather there is more fear, anxiety and heartache.

If you have listened carefully to the gospel you will agree it doesn't sound anything at all like the Christmas story as it is told in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. Many of the familiar Christmas elements from the other gospels are absent There is no pregnant Mary. There is no Shepherds, No manger scene, no wise men following a star and the cute cuddly baby Jesus is nowhere to be found

And this let us wonder why John begins his Gospel this way

John wants to tell his readers what God was doing in and through Jesus did not just begin in Bethlehem. It did not begin with the physical birth of a Jewish baby. But it really began long before the world ever was. John wants to give us the

TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

In the Gospel reading John 1v 14 we read “*And the Word became flesh and made is dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the father full of grace and truth.*”

Allow me to tell you a story "I'll be back soon," a World War II soldier told his wife before leaving her and their infant son. Four years of war and fighting went by. The young mother would show her boy a photo of the soldier and say, "See, that's your daddy. One day he's going to come home." In reality, she didn't know what to expect.

One morning the boy said, "Mommy, wouldn't it be great if Daddy would just step out of the picture frame?"

In a sense that's what God did 2,000 years ago. As part of his eternal plan, he stepped out of heaven and became human so that you and I could look at Jesus and say, "That's what God looks like."

I want us to reflect on two aspects of our Gospel reading that will help us to understand the true meaning of Christmas.

1. The Person of Christmas
2. The power and purpose of Christmas

1. THE PERSON OF CHRISTMAS

In v 1 and 2 we read “Before *the Word was created the Word already existed he was with God and was the same as God. From the very beginning the WORD was with God*”

As I mentioned before in this Gospel there is no reference to the baby Jesus rather John paints the picture of Jesus as the WORD of God. Three important truths are revealed about this WORD--- about Jesus.

- a. *Jesus is eternal*: According to this verse Jesus has simply always existed he has been here throughout all the endless ages.

- b. ***Jesus is equally God***: This verse says that Jesus was with God
- c. ***Jesus is essentially God***: The statement and the word was God is the clearest statement of the Divine nature of Jesus. Not only is Jesus (the WORD) co-eternal, and co-equal with God, the word is God

When he stepped out, Jesus Christ became the visible expression of the invisible God. He became a visual aid, as it were, to reveal the nature of the Father. He was God in a form of flesh. He was God expressing himself in a language that we could understand. He was God announcing to the world: "I have come!" I am here

When Jesus became a man He showed that God was not merely a principle but a person. Jesus was not an idea of God, not a picture of God, but God Himself in human form.

2. THE POWER AND PURPOSE OF CHRISTMAS

V 3 ***“Through him God made all things not one thing in all creation was made without him.*** In V14 ***“The word became a human being and full of grace and truth lived amongst us”***

Here we have the creator of the universe (creation) who humbled himself and became a creature in creation. God became dependent on a human mother. Jesus who was the agent of creation stepped out of eternity, laid aside his glory and entered this world as a human baby. God is no longer found out there or up there God is no longer to be thought of and experienced as disconnected and far removed from the world as some of us can sometimes feel God to be.

Let me tell you the following story:

“A couple of months before Christmas, the wife of a postman was killed in a car accident. The husband was overcome with grief and was trying to work through his sorrow and he stayed late at the post office sorting through the mountain of mail that always come through, the mail that had been lost and to find where it should be re-routed. He came across a letter that was addressed to Santa Clause and he noticed that the address at the top of the letter was his own address. So he opened the letter looking down at the bottom of the page he saw that it was his only daughter’s signature and he read

Dear Santa

My mommy died two months ago and since then my daddy has been crying himself to sleep every night. He says only eternity will heal him would you please send a little bit of eternity to my Dad this Christmas Season”

Well God not only sent a little bit of eternity. He sent us the very heart of heaven, he sent his Son Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world

Jesus became human to feel our hurt

In one act of becoming human He identified with our pain. The pain of loneliness. The hurt of rejection. The sadness of losing a loved one to death. The scars of mental or physical abuse.

When we suffer pain, we want others to understand. We want others to be like us so they can identify with us. We don't want to be alone. We want others to feel our pain and our hurt. When Jesus became a man He understood us; He identified with us; He felt our pain, and He hurt. Even now during the COVID 19 pandemic

God came to be fully human to know all our fears and experiences first hand all our problems He came to tell us that underneath it all we really safe

In v 4 and 5 we read “***The word was the source of life and this life brought light to mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out***”

Jesus came to bring light into the darkness

Yes the situation in the world in South Africa and in our communities seems dark and despairing In South Africa--- Recent statistics shows that 26 276 people have died because of the CORONA Virus and there are 983 359 positive cases of the Corona Virus. And some of you sitting here are experience your own personal darkness of loved ones that have died or are COVID positive.

But I want to encourage you this morning that Jesus Christ came into this world on Christmas Day to bring light into this dark situation– remember Jesus knows your pain because he himself became human. Jesus came to deliver us from darkness and bring us into his glorious light.

CONCLUSION

May you be reminded that yes, although this Christmas Season is different this year, we must not lose faith, we must still trust and believe that God will protect and bring healing from the COVID 19 pandemic. Jesus is here with us and His light still shines and gives us hope during this dark, challenging time. *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”—Let remember this and take it with us as we enter 2021*

**I do not know the future,
but I know the God who knows
And in his perfect wisdom,
unknowing I repose**

**What good could come of knowing?
How little I could do
To meet the joys or sorrows
That I am coming to**

**I do not know the future
But I know the God who knows
I make his love my study
And follow where he goes**

**The path its joy and sorrows
I do not care to trace
Content to know his goodness
His mercy and his grace**