

The Word Became Human
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Happy New Year! It's that time of year we make New Year Resolutions. I know better than to ask how well you are doing with the resolutions you made just two days ago!

The editor of *Readers Digest* claims that he is able to keep all of his New Year's resolutions, every single one. How does he do it? He just makes realistic resolutions. Last year he resolved to gain 5 pounds. And he did. This year, he writes, will be the year I don't clean out my garage. Following his lead, this year I resolve not to clean off my office desk. I'm quite certain I won't break that resolution!

Or, if you are sincere about keeping resolutions, you really only have to keep them until February 17, which is Ash Wednesday. Then you can give them up for Lent!

The dawning of a New Year serves as a reminder to me that time passes all too quickly. Emma will celebrate her 4th birthday at the end of the month. It seems like just yesterday she was born. I'm beginning my 8th year of ministry here at Trinity. Weren't we just unpacking boxes just a couple of weeks ago?

As we begin this New Year, what better passage of Scripture to focus upon than the first chapter of John's Gospel. These are some of the most beautiful, most powerful words in the Bible.

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God... The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought life to everyone. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it...

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him... But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

John uses some stunning language to help us fully grasp who Jesus is. Jesus Christ is personified as "The Word." And the Word of God is a very powerful thing. If we flip back to the Old Testament, to the opening chapters of Genesis, we read these words: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* John begins his gospel in a similar way: *In the beginning the Word already existed.* Remember how God created the world? God simply spoke, God said the Word, and it happened. *God said, Let there be light, and light appeared.* God's Word is so powerful that all God has to do is speak and things begin to happen.

It is the same for Jesus. Remember when he raises Lazarus from the dead? How does it do it? Jesus shouts out, “*Lazarus, come out!*” and Lazarus wakes up and walks out of his tomb. Jesus simply says the Word, and those things which once were dead come back to life.

John is reminding us how powerful the Word is. Jesus, the second person of the divine Trinity, was with God from the very beginning, simply speaking the Word to make things happen.

A judge says a few words, and a person’s life is forever changed. The three simple words “I love you” can be life-changing. If our human words are capable of carrying so much power, think of the power behind the Word of God.

Another thing John reminds us is that Jesus *is* the Word of God. When we hear “the Word of God” we tend to think of the Bible. That makes sense because Lutherans believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. But the power of the Scriptures is not in the words on the printed page, but in the impact those words have upon the hearer. When the words printed in the Bible take root in our lives and actually cause a change within us, then it becomes the true, living “Word of God.”

John is teaching us that it is Jesus who will be able to make the Word of God come alive most fully for us. If we want to understand the ways of God, then Jesus is the one to whom we should listen. If we want to live as God would have us live, then our role model must be Jesus. If we want to know what God would say and think, and what God would do, then John encourages us to hang around with Jesus. For, as John reminds us, Jesus will reveal the very heart of God to us.

How different our lives would be if in this New Year we would make the sincere resolution to hang around more with Jesus. Through Bible study, prayer, worship, devotions, we would set aside one-on-one time with God each day to allow his powerful, life-giving Word to nurture and shape our lives.

What would happen if in this New Year each of us would honestly pray the words of the well-known hymn: “Here I am, Lord; I will go, Lord, if you lead me.” If each of us would be willing to offer our lives to God that completely, our congregation would never be the same. We would be on-fire for the Lord, willing and able to do anything that the Lord would ask of us in the coming year.

If all of John’s lingo about the pre-existent Word makes you want to say, “English please!” I here ya! This is deep stuff! The good news, that which we can finally make sense of and celebrate, is this: the Word that existed from the very beginning has now come to earth. John says, *So the Word became human and made his home among us.* He was born to a virgin named Mary, in a stable in Bethlehem, just as the Old Testament foretold. Jesus, the Word made flesh, came so that we could experience God’s love firsthand – pure, glorious, grace-filled love in human form.

God became just like us so that he could tell us in language we understand how much he loves us and his plan for our salvation. God became human and made his home among us so that he could grace us with forgiveness and mercy.

A man by the name of Mark Wellman, a paraplegic, paralyzed from the waist down, made the history books when he climbed to the top of Half Dome Mountain in Yosemite National Park. It took him two weeks of grueling, dangerous maneuvering, but he made it.

When I heard that story I wondered how in the world did a paraplegic accomplish such a feat? I discovered that he had a little help, help by the name of Mark Corbett, Yosemite's most experienced rock climber. Mark would always go before the paralyzed climber, scouting out the best crevices to use, and then pointing them out. The paralyzed climber made it only because he had an expert guide, one who could show him the way to victory.

Jesus Christ is our Mark Corbett, our expert guide, one who will show us the way to victory. Instead of God making us take our journey of faith all by ourselves, God sends his one and only Son to earth, to show us the way that leads to victory.

That is the good news that we celebrate at Christmas – the Word becoming human and living among us, showing us the way that leads to our heavenly Father.

Thanks be to God! Amen.