
God's Gift to Us

A sermon by the Rev. Deacon Juan Sandoval
The First Sunday after Christmas – Year C

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Amen.

Years ago, we took our daughter and our two granddaughters to visit their maternal grandmother in San Diego. As part of our trip, we decided we would drive up to Disneyland and spend a few days. We began our trek up to Disneyland and everyone was safely secured in their seats. About an hour or so in, the eldest granddaughter asks "Are we there yet?" Not yet. We continued driving up I-5 toward Anaheim. A few minutes later came the question again, "Are we there yet?" No, Patricia, we are not there yet. As we continued to drive the question came again several times. Again, Patricia asks "are we there yet?" And finally, having heard this enough, Amber, the 4-year-old younger granddaughter speaks up to say, "when the car stops, we will be there!" Thus ends the lesson.

You, as a child or as a parent have probably heard something similar to this. Is it Christmas yet? How many days to Christmas? As a child, Christmas seemed to take an eternity for Christmas to arrive. It is highly anticipated and most likely one of the most anticipated days of the year.

How was your Christmas? It is a question that I have responded to many times this year and in the past. I feel like most people are assuming that Christmas is over. This also assumes we have already celebrated Jesus's birthday and perhaps at some point said "Happy Birthday Dear Jesus." Again, indicating Christmas and the anniversary of his birthday is a past event.

Many folks take down the tree and any decorations the day after Christmas, pack them up and now are in storage until next year. I know I had a neighbor who did this every year and depending on the day of the week, might even start the dismantling on Christmas day.

It seems to me that many of us, including me, are often so event driven that we don't seem to have time to savor the moment or the event. Take a look at your calendar and see if your calendar is filled with events to come. Perhaps we even look at the calendar and say, "This is great, I have nothing on my calendar this day! Nothing to do, nothing to experience. Christmas is over, next event."

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God. Today, Saint John provides us with a different meaning, a different understanding of Christmas. John gives us a story of re-creation and how God provides for us, for all of us who were made in the image of God. For John, God in becoming flesh in Jesus has committed God's self not only to revealing what God's grace looks like, but that God wants to know it and feel it as well.

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us."

Perhaps God wanted us, humans, to see God's face and to hear God's voice and even to touch God, God Incarnate. Jesus, who grows under the tutelage of Joseph, Jesus, the Son of God, the Word wanted to experience humanity and through carpentry experienced the feel, the labor of humanity, the work of humanity, and the sweat of humanity.

The dwelling of God among us is a deeply intimate, personal claim and assumes God's commitment to and continuity with God's people. Moreover, in the Word made flesh and dwelling among us, now God not only goes where God's people go, but is who they are. That is, God now dwells with us by taking on our form, our

humanity.

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”

And the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. And the Word became flesh and pitched a tent and moved into the neighborhood. These were different translations of this passage. Now God is where God's people are, God is where God's people go and WE are God's people. We as God's people proclaim witness to Christ as we celebrate the season of Christmas and God incarnate.

So today, the day after the celebration of Jesus' birth, we can take comfort in God's sharing this beautiful gift with us. It is amazing to me, it is beautiful to me and my heart yearns for more time to celebrate this time of giving, this time of special relationship. We have been given not only the gift of Jesus but have been given the gift to become children of God.

Everywhere we go we can look into the faces of our family members, our friends and yes, even strangers and see the image of God and perhaps it reminds each of us that we too have been created in the image of God. It is a constant reminder, and it is about Christmas and how we Christmas. So perhaps we should not ask *how was your Christmas*, but *how are you Christmasing?* Are we seeing the Word in our family, friends and strangers?

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us.” The Word has never stopped living in us, in our hearts, in our minds and in our souls. We still have several days to continue our “Christmasing,” we still have time in whatever we do, wherever we travel, wherever we are, look for the image of God in others this day, this season and celebrate the amazingness of Christmas each day of your life.

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice.

Happy Christmasing!

AMEN.