

Sermon Notes December 25, 2016 “One Small Step” John 1:1-18

It was the week of Christmas 48 years ago that Frank Borman, William Anders and James Lovell left earth in Apollo 8 for that breathtaking first voyage to the moon and back. Six months later, on July 20, 1969, the third trip to the moon would be taken by Neil Armstrong. That was the one where they touched down on the surface of the moon—when he took that step onto the moon's surface and said, "*One small step for man, one giant step for mankind.*"

No matter how you record human history that accomplishment ranks at the top of the accomplishments of humankind. My guess is that if you were to write human history in terms of spectacular moments and spectacular achievements that has to be among the greatest. Or is it? Something else happened that same week in the country of Peru. As a matter of fact, it was happening the same hour that Neil Armstrong put his foot down on the moon. Two women, Harriet Fields and Hattie Kneeland, were making contact for the first time with a tribe of warriors known as the Matsas. They had turned into warriors and killers. Another tribe had attacked them and ever since then they had been killers. Today the Matsas are still in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of the Amazon jungle; but they're different people today. The *Word* has become flesh to them; it has dwelt among them, full of grace and truth, full of glory. And they know what it means to have seen the *One and Only of the Father...* and to love Him.

This story about the Matsas tribe is ironic—that while all the eyes and ears on earth were focused on heaven, all the eyes and ears of heaven were fixed on a small, insignificant tribe out in the middle of nowhere called the Matsas. "One small insignificant step on earth, one giant step in eternity." What struck me this is that it was a parallel, and it can be no matter when it happens, of the Christmas story.

God is constantly and consistently doing things in little out of the way places that matter for eternity. Only a few people would know about it, only a few others would care about it, but that's the way the Christmas story was written; that's the way it all began. It hasn't changed much

since then, has it? While everybody else was hurrying around, God's Word became flesh, in a filthy, dirty stable, in an out of the way town, and not many people took notice. But, it matters for eternity to those of us who have. God's concern is first always “that we who were dead in our transgressions,” are made alive in Christ—the living Word.

John as he writes in this prologue to the Gospel, suggests 3 ways (*and I think they're sort of woven and wrapped throughout his Gospel*), by which the Word of God becomes flesh and dwells among us.

1. THE FIRST, IS THE WORD BECOMES FLESH IN LOVE.

God's Word become flesh is always wrapped in love. It's a specific time and place and to a specific people that love came. Everything about that phrase makes it specific—God—it's not an idea that people finally understood, it's not some philosophy that people finally accepted, it isn't some warm fuzzy feeling that sort of makes you feel good—it's the Word, it's God who took on human form!

In the Greek “dwelling” is the same word “tabernacle.” In the Old Testament, the bright cloud of the presence of God settled on the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled it! John, the Gospel writer, is certainly telling his readers that God manifested Himself most clearly when the Word became flesh. The Incarnate Word is the true Shekinah, the ultimate manifestation of the presence of God among human beings, and this Word became a man!

"We have beheld His glory, full of grace." It was a gift. We didn't have to pay for it—He did! God's coming is always wrapped in love. Two chapters later John would write, “For 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.”

2. THE SECOND WAY THE WORD BECOMES FLESH IS BY LIGHTING UP THE DARKNESS.

"In Him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not understood it."

Christmas really is the affirmation that this is not an abandoned world. There is plenty of darkness in this world of ours. There's probably reason

at times for despair, but the love of Christ cannot be overcome, and the light of Christ can never be put out—that's what John says.

It's ironic, that the Matsas tribe, after all the years of hiding, of living contrary even to their own values, that the first ones to find them would be those who would kill them with kindness. The first ones who would meet them would embrace them with the love of Christ—and would bring a light into the midst of their darkness—would bring hope when they saw no reason to live.

The Word became flesh and made His home among us, full of glory. The word in Greek is 'doxa', from which we get doxology. It means brightness. This light of Christ has a power that penetrates the darkest of places, it has a brightness that nothing in the world can ever match, and nothing in the world can ever dim.

3. And THIRDLY, GIVING US A HOPE AND A REASON FOR LIVING.

When God's Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, He gives life. The gospel brought a whole new life to this hopeless, frightened tribe—a new life in Jesus Christ. They still haven't forgotten what they were, and what by His grace and His glory and His truth, they have become because of Jesus. Jesus means everything to them; He's given them life, new life that is worth living, and they know how precious it is. There's still so much to do there, but I would suggest to you that there's a whole lot more that needs to be done here, in this mission field.

I'm privileged, as many of you are, to know the One and Only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Don't ever take that for granted. He didn't come just to embrace us but to die for us. That great God in that feed trough. That's who the baby is. He lost his glory so that we unimportant, messed up, sinful people could have glory forever. He lost His peace so we could have infinite peace. He was kicked out. There was no room for Him in the inn so we could dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Christmas means anything can change. Christmas means you can trust Him. Christmas means you have to follow Him with all your heart. Let

me ask you, "Will you trust Him and follow Him with all your heart?
And will you take this message, one step at a time, into this world that
needs the life and light Jesus offers?"