



TOUCH POINT

## Word Swaddling – Touchpoint for December 20, 2023

### John 1:1-14 (NRSVUE) The Word Became Flesh

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**Grace and Peace to you from the mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.**

During the time of John, he observed two cultures at odds, one making many references to a Messiah and one not knowing anything of a Messiah. They were cultures with bitterly contested differences. The first Christians were Jews. John lived among the Greeks and sought a similar language in hopes of sharing the good news with the Greeks. He found the one thing they shared: the importance of Word. Word, to the Hebrews, spoke of God as a force with the power to speak. To the Jews, words mattered. So important, that the Old Testament is flowing with Word as the name of God. Word was a power separate from human beings. For concern that references to God would become human-like in use, the *word* of God was used in place of the *name* of God.

The Greeks also believed that word was important. For Greeks, word meant reason. In concert, the word of God came through mystery of wisdom, reason, power, and knowledge. It appears this is the motivation for John's words in Chapter 1. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

In Genesis, Word was something other than human that released a force so great it created the Big Bang and the beginning of consciousness. The Word was present when it exploded from nothingness. In creation it is the force of Spirit saying, matter matters. In John, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John is telling the story of Jesus, and it reaches those without an understanding of Hebrew history and culture. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* Though born without privilege, the Word was no less powerful, no less wise, and no less reasonable. In the birth of a child, it became matter, like us.

The word brought two cultures the ability to hear in their own understanding. The struggles would continue with Jesus-following Jews and Greeks. But I think it is with all of us today when we don't come to Word as children. Infants are dependent upon someone else and children are curious with divine doubt.

“Jesus is beyond all usual categories of power because he embodies the gentle, gracious, resilient, demanding power of God. He does not trifle in temples and cities and dynasties, but in the power and truth of the creator God. Jesus turns everything upside down. The ones who ought to know and press to know and pretend to know have things hidden from them. And the ones who do not struggle to collect all the secrets, they have God’s truth easily given to them. So, says Jesus, if you want to know the mysteries, you have been looking in the wrong place, for the little ones are the ones who know.” – *Walter Brueggemann*

This day of the Messiah was the day of the word becoming flesh. This day says that all things material matter. This mystery was no longer a frightening – it was embodied in innocence, birth in flesh. It brought cosmic light to those awaiting Messiah and those without the language of Messiah. “...and then there was light.” Word.

The birth of an innocent infant was perhaps as big as *The Big Bang*. This is how Judy Cannato describes the light in her book, *Radical Amazement*.

“The light of the soul throws Sparks, can send up flares, build signal fires, causes proper matters to catch fire period to display the Lantern of the soul and shadowy times like these to be fierce and to show mercy toward others both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it to be spark throwers to send up flares to be fierce with fire this is what our world so desperately needs from us let us together claim our light so that once again all creation knows its fundamental nature and deepest truth. What a radically amazing invitation we have received.”

When I was Spiritual Director at Calvary Addiction and Recovery Center, I was having a session with a Jewish resident who came regularly to my daily Chapel. I asked her if she was going to attend the Christmas Eve service. She said, “No, I will be in my room lighting the Menorah. I said, “Why don’t you light it in chapel? Do you have a reading you can share?” Surprised, she said, “Sure!”

It was a beautiful service, and we were all stunned and without words. The Word was with us and dwelt among us. Two cultures joining with gratitude for The Word.

This all makes me wonder if we are up for this, a big bang of awakening in our lives. Can we seek, like John, a Word that all people can understand to bring good tidings to all people? A Word that carries so much power and force that it could melt the hardness of our culture? A Word so comforting that it can return to us an innocence of wonder? The Word I speak of gets smothered by the seven deadly sins.

It is a Word that can only be birthed in humbleness. This might sound trite, but maybe that's the problem. I'm afraid to appear simple minded to others if I say the word. This Word is available to all of us but we see it as ineffective, inefficient, and powerless. That Word is love. In my opinion, our modern culture does not see God as Word with the same fervency as the Jews and the Greeks did.

Maybe Christmas has lost what Saint Francis wanted in lighting lights: a celebration of love entering the world. We fight over traditions and philosophies, and it deprives us of the experience of love. It would take an absolute surrender to God as love. After all, the scriptures we read say God is love. Should love replace Word as the name of God for our generation? Maybe that's a bit provocative. It even seems naughty to me to say we would do well to replace the name God with Love. But we all know it's true! We've witnessed the power of love transform like the big bang. Let's reflect on love's power in our lives. We would write our own gospel where God/Love became flesh in our lives.

Like my Jewish friend, and those Christians and agnostics on Christmas Eve together, Love would become flesh and we would dwell among others and they with us.

**Amen**

## Opening Songs

### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taize Choir, Remember Me)

Be still, know that I am God

### **Prepare the Way**

(Taizé)

Prepare the way of the Lord. And all the people will see the salvation of our God.

## Bible Passage

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

## Touchpoint

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

### **My Soul Proclaims**

(Marty Haugen)

My soul proclaims your greatness O God, and my spirit rejoices in you.

- 1) My being proclaims the greatness of God. My spirit finds joy in my savior.  
For you regard me in my lowliness and every age shall call me blest.
- 2) Great and mighty are you, O holy One, strong is your kindness evermore.  
How you favor the weak and lowly ones. Humbling the proud of heart.
- 3) You have cast down the mighty from their thrones. Raising up those of low degree.  
You have filled the hungry with wondrous things and sent the rich empty away.

## The Meal

### **Our Father (The Lord's Prayer)**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

## Benediction

### **O, Come, O, Come Emmanuel**

(Salt of the Sound)

O, Come, O, Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel.  
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.