

**"THE WORD BECAME A BABY BOY."
Rev. Robert T. Woodyard
First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden
December 25, 2013, 10:00am**

Text for the Sermon: Luke 2:1-20

Introduction.

We want to say thank you again for all the gifts, cards, pictures, notes of encouragement and delicious Christmas goodies. Based on all the pictures we got, we have to say this is a really good looking congregation.

The Lord has been so good to us here, we love the privilege of sharing our seventh Christmas with you and we thank God for all of you. All our sons and a wonderful daughter-in-law are home. And on Saturday most of my extended family will be with us, 18 of us together. It's particularly special to us after 27 years away from family.

This advent we have been exploring this indescribable miracle of the Word becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent creator God of the universe became a single cell, a single microscopic fertilized human egg cell. And then He became a cluster of cells. Before long hands and feet and eyes began to differentiate and form.

The Word became a baby boy.

Last Sunday evening at our wonderful children's program I talked about the difference between fairy tales and the Christmas story. I told the kids that there was a difference. But I wonder if they all believed me because if you think about it, what we adults have done to the Christmas story is turn it into a story that looks and sounds a lot like a fairy tale.

The manger is all warm and cozy. The animals are all cute and fuzzy, making sweet sounds. The straw is all clean. The baby awakes and no crying He makes. Mary looks like a Disney princess and Joseph is a tall, dark and handsome knight in shining armor. Neither of them looks like they have been up all night nor like they have just walked a hundred miles on foot in the ninth month of Mary's pregnancy.

The first real miracle of Christmas isn't that Mary gave birth to the Son of God, but that she didn't give birth to the Son of God on the side of the road about twenty miles south of Nazareth.

We have turned the Christmas story into a Christmas card scene or a coffee table display complete with white winged angels, twinkling stars and impressive Eastern kings. That all sounds very much like a fairy tale.

Why do we do this to the Christmas story? Maybe in the words of T.S. Eliot in the *Four Quartets*, "Humankind cannot bear very much reality."

The Word didn't become porcelain or ceramic, pewter or plastic. The Word became flesh, crying, spitting up, messing diapers or whatever they used for diapers before diapers and wipes and talcum powder were invented, not to mention washing machines and dryers.

The Son of God became the son of Joseph and Mary which to some people's way of thinking meant that He was a child of questionable birth, the fruit of someone's fornication.

A little baby was born to a poor teenage mom whose world had been totally turned upside down nine months before. That baby was born in a barn and laid in a feeding trough that no doubt had to be dumped over before it could be used. Whatever animals were in the barn could have cared less. They just went about their business, doing what animals do at their north and south end.

The wise men were much more likely to be some sort of pagan sorcerers or wizards, ancient astrologers or maybe Zoroastrian priests.

And it was worse than even that. The world that baby was born into was no idyllic scene. It was ruled by cruel foreign tyrants in Rome. And their underlings in Jerusalem were no better. Politically there was corruption, and coercion.

People like to talk about the pax romana, or the peace of Rome and how there were no wars during that time. But the peace was a forced or coerced peace. Like the peace in Eastern Germany before the wall fell. Sure there were no wars but there was no freedom either.

Spiritually things were a train wreck. Evil was called good, good was called evil, the leaders were hypocrites who push heavy burdens on the people. Greek pagan religious influences mingled with the Jewish faith.

Jesus was born into a messy barn in the midst of a messy world. A world of poverty, homelessness, political and spiritual turmoil. So much so that within a year of being born Jesus' parents were fleeing for their lives to Egypt. Like so many countless millions of poverty stricken people in the Middle East and Africa today who are refugees in foreign countries because of the political and spiritual chaos in their own countries.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He came to a world a lot scarier and a lot dirtier than the one we sing about in Christmas carols.

The Word became flesh and came into a despairing, hopeless, weary world.

Luke 2:34-35 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Why did Jesus come as a *baby*? To identify with our cute, cuddly nature? No, to identify with our true weakness and dependence. He went to the beginning, to the depths of human existence to experience everything we experience.

Why did Jesus come to a *virgin*? To identify with the shame and guilt of questionable beginnings and background. To endure the whispers of illegitimacy. His birth was a scandal and His own people never let Him forget it.

Why did Jesus come to a *poor family*? Why not a royal family? Why did the King of Kings become a servant of all? To identify with our true poverty. He who was rich became poor so that we who are poor could become rich (II Corinthians 8:9).

The Son of God became a son of man that the sons of man might become sons of God. God was changed into our likeness so we could be changed into His likeness.

Application and Conclusion.

During this advent season we have been considering how Jesus was the Word made flesh. Sometimes when we are dealing with a subject like the Christmas story that is so familiar to us, it's good consider it from a different angle that we might regain some of the wonder and awe of how great a thing this is that God has done.

I hope you have seen the wonder of God incarnate and have a deeper appreciation of our Savior and who He is and what He has done for us and what He continues to do for us.

May the staggering, breathtaking wonder of God's love fill you with a new and deeper love for Christ. And may the length and width and breadth and depth of His love fill your heart and life more and more.

With every gift you give and every gift you receive reflect on the gift that God has given and the grace you have received.

I close with the words of the great preacher, Charles Spurgeon on December 24, 1854:

Now is the time to go to our houses for feasting. Go and enjoy and celebrate your Savior's birth. Feast, Christians, feast. Be glad, you have a right to be very happy. In the words of Solomon, "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts your works" because of the works of Jesus.

Let your faith give you great joy, because to us a child has been born, a Son has been given and He is Jesus Christ the Lord. Glory to God and Amen.

Prayer: Holy Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for thinking of this day before the beginning of time. We can scarcely imagine how you stood on the threshold of heaven and said good-bye to your only Son and love came down and was born in a manger. Thank you for the indescribable gift of the incarnation of your son. Thank you for making it possible for God and sinners to be reconciled. Thank you that by His birth we no more may die. All glory and praise belongs to you. Glory to the new born King. Glory to God in the highest. We love you Lord Jesus and we pray in your name. Amen.

Announcements:

Good morning. Merry Christmas.

On behalf of the staff of First Church we thank God for all of you and for all your kindness and support and expressions of love this season. And on behalf of my family, we are grateful for all of you and for the blessing of getting to be the pastor family here. We love you all.

No Fellowship time following this morning's service.

This Sunday evening will be our Eve of New Year's Eve Prayer and Communion service at 6:00PM.

Edith W., Friday 11AM.

Stand now and *welcome one another to worship*.

Call to Worship:

See bulletin

Invocation:

Glory to you, O God, in the highest. All glory, praise and honor belong to you, O Lord God almighty. No man can behold your face and live, yet you have made it possible for us to glimpse your glory by sending your Son. You have revealed yourself to us, you have first loved us, you have saved us and you have once again brought us to the day of our dear Savior's birth, and we worship and adore you.

You are the one we desire, grant us the desire of our hearts.

You are the one we seek, grant that we may find you.

You are the one we love, receive our love.

O God, be with us day. Visit us in hearts made ready through worship. Grant, O God, that the Spirit of Christ Himself may be born afresh in our hearts and that we might joyfully welcome Christ to reign over us as our King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Glory to you, O God, in the highest. Glory to you in the name of Jesus.

Benediction:

Our parting hymn is Glory to God. If you know Dutch we invite you to sing in Dutch.

Christ the Savior is born. He is lord at his birth.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.