

Tuesday, December 25, 2018 - Christmas Day
“The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us”

John 1: 1-14

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Central Image; Single Focus

Adapted from CSL “The Word Became Flesh”

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

September 13, 2006. That’s when it all happened. That’s when things went south.

That’s when the bottom fell out and that’s when everything came completely undone.

September 13, 2006.

On March 13, 1930, things had begun with so much excitement. There was fanfare. There were fireworks. And there was a great flourish of excitement! And it was global. It really was. But that was on March 13, 1930, when it was discovered.

On September 13, 2006, it all came crashing down. On that day the International Astronomical Union, meeting in Prague in the Czech Republic, voted to downgrade the planet Pluto. To what? To a dwarf planet! The audacity of it all! Pluto was no longer Pluto! The International Astronomical Union now officially gives Pluto the “minor planet designation: #134340.” That’s right. Pluto got bumped. Pluto got cut from the team. Voted off the island. Hosed. Rejected. Demoted. Devalued. Demeaned. Dismissed. One day Pluto’s in; The next day Pluto’s out - take a number Pluto, behind 134,339 insignificant objects orbiting our sun that are not worth naming. This was such a stunning turn of events that in 2006 the word of the year was what?

Plutoed! Pluto, the proper noun, became Pluto the verb—plutoed. Plutoed? We all know what that feels like. We were the wrong size, the wrong height, the wrong shape, the wrong color, the wrong age. We had the wrong friends and went to the wrong school. And we had the wrong parents. People get plutoed by bosses, businesses, boyfriends, and all kinds of busybodies.

Throughout Advent we looked at this text, pretty much verse by verse and saw: God created through Christ. God sent John the Baptist to reveal Christ. God is with us in Christ -

incarnate. “Incarnation” is shorthand for John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” And now we have seen His glory!

And he did it for plutoed people. John describes them throughout his Gospel. The Samaritan woman, who had been divorced five times. The paralytic, who had been crippled for thirty-eight years. Mary and Martha, whose brother Lazarus had died. The man born blind. Discouraged disciples. Sheep without a shepherd. Rejected. All of them. The whole lot. But John announces the incarnation—God is with us in Christ. And he did it for plutoed people. Let’s dig deeper.

The Word. By now we all know John 1:1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Our God is not silent. Our God speaks! Throughout the Old Testament God’s Word creates, directs, controls, and shapes events. In fact, the expression, “The Word of the Lord” appears 261 times in the Old Testament—261 times! I’m just sayin’! But hold on to your seat, because the Word is more than an element of speech; or an expression; or a sound; or an idea.

The Word became flesh. The creative, powerful, true and enduring Word of the Lord became flesh! When connected to God, sophisticated Greeks and Romans of John’s day recoiled from the word “flesh.” Flesh, to them, was doomed to be destroyed. What matters most is our spirit. Flesh is worth nothing. No god in his right mind would ever deal with anything as degrading as flesh. Yet that’s exactly what our God did.

Jesus is not only one substance with the Father. (Jesus is true God.) Jesus is also one substance with you. (Jesus is true man.) The Word, God the Son and the Son of God. He became flesh. God became hungry, thirsty and tired. God felt disappointment, sorrow, hurt, loneliness, and rejection. He knows my name and he feels my pain!

But don’t be confused. The Word didn’t change into flesh. The Word didn’t morph into flesh. And the Word didn’t transition into flesh. That’s not what John writes. If the Word changed, morphed, or transitioned into flesh he would no longer be God. But remaining what

he was, he became what we are. That's it! Remaining what he was—God; Christ became what we are—flesh.

His golden throne room was left in favor of a dirty sheep pen. Worshiping angels crying out from eternity past, “Holy! Holy! Holy!” were replaced by bewildered shepherds. Lying there in a manger, Jesus looks like anything but God. His face is wrinkled and red. His cry, though strong and healthy, is still the helpless and piercing cry of an infant. Majesty in the midst of the mundane. God entering the world on the floor of a stable, through the womb of a teenager, in the presence of a carpenter. God has eyebrows, elbows, thumbs, toes, two kidneys, and a spleen. No silk. No ivory. No hype. No hoopla. Not for this Babe in Bethlehem. The Word became flesh.

John drives this point home when he writes about Jesus on trial before Pontius Pilate. Pilate has Jesus's flesh, ripped, torn, dressed in purple and crowned with thorns. Then he brings Jesus out before the crowd and says in John 19:5, “Behold the man!” Here is the man. Flesh. Flesh and blood. Flesh and blood and a beaten body. That's God we're talking about. The God who gets plutoed! Demoted, devalued, dismissed, disdained, demeaned, and left for dead.

The Word became flesh and dwelt. The word literally means “pitch a tent.” It's an Old Testament idea. Moses built the tabernacle—a tent—so God could dwell with Israel. Solomon followed Moses. He built a temple so God could dwell with Israel. The Message Bible doesn't use the word “dwell” but rather “moved into the neighborhood.” By living in Moses's tabernacle and in Solomon's temple God moved into Israel's neighborhood. And now God moves into our neighborhood, the human neighborhood! But what kind of neighborhood is that?

It's a neighborhood where we hurt each other deeply, with words, cold shoulders, and with our callous hearts. It's a neighborhood where we ignore each other's needs repeatedly because we're so busy and have such important meetings. It's a neighborhood where we carelessly pluto people with accusations and condemnations—positioning ourselves as judge

and jury. Our neighborhood is filled with mixed-up and messed-up people. How do I know? Because sometimes I'm as mixed up and messed up as anybody! But God still decided to move into this neighborhood!

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Us! You and me! Not just the high and mighty. Not just the kings and queens. Not just the polished, the preppy, the preferred, the pretty, and the powerful. The Word dwelt "among us!" Him. Her. Them. You. Me. Us!

Too often, though, when we get plutoed and our world breaks into a million pieces, this promise falls on deaf ears and hard hearts. We shrug our shoulders and say, "So what? Who cares? I have no hope!"

Once my car died. So I turned the ignition 417 times. Nothing. So I did what any fair-minded pastor would do. I doused my car with beer, confident that two six packs would stir some life in my dead car. When that didn't work I placed a TV in front of the car and turned on a good baseball game. That would do the trick. Right? Wrong. So I purchased the latest issue of Pent-Garage magazine and let my car look at some European beauties. The car still had no life.

You probably think I have the IQ of a cement sidewalk! Who turns to booze, baseball, and bodies when things are dilapidated and dead? Too many. Far too many. Including you. Including me. Listen closely. Only Jesus delivers life to people who have been plutoed. And he delivers life to us, through the means of grace—baptism, the Holy Supper, and the Gospel.

True. Some may demote you. Others may dismiss you. And the devil wants to destroy you. But God claims you. God restores you. God loves you. How can I be so sure? "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us!" In Jesus' name, Amen.