

## SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

TEXT: JOHN 1:1-3, 14

THEME: THE WORD MADE FLESH

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 14 And the Word became flesh

and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the

Father, full of grace and truth.

In the name of Jesus:

It was when I was on Sabbatical in Germany, about 2002. I was on a Luther Land tour, a tour of East and West Germany at the time, visiting many of the sites of Dr. Martin Luther. One day we would visit the place of his birth, the next day, where he went to school, we would see the monastery where Luther served, the church where he nailed the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, and the place where he died. But the trip wasn't only about Luther, we were able to go sightseeing in Berlin, see the Berlin Wall, Checkpoint Charlie, and the cities of Frankfurt and Leipzig. And on the way to these destinations, we would stop along the way for a stretch, a quick break, some shopping, and a meal.

One day we stopped in a little German town named Rothenburg . This town is renowned for its Christmas store, it is the headquarters for Katie Wohlfahrt, a store that is all about Christmas. When you go into the store is it like going into a Macy's department store at Christmas, with aisles and aisles of anything and everything Christmas. As our tour group went shopping, my stomach was growling so I went shopping of a different sort, I went looking to get something to eat. I began to walk up and down the city's streets, looking for a place where I could quiet my growling stomach.

Now, I took German in high school, and I had taken a test in theological German at Seminary, but all my knowledge in German left me unprepared for the vocabulary I encountered on the menus posted outside of the restaurants. Needless to say, I had no idea what was on these menus, what they were even describing! If I were to go in and order off of the menu, I would have been lost, not knowing what I was ordering or what I was eating. I am not an adventurous culinary person by nature, so I continued to search for a place where I could find a bite to eat, a place where I could at least identify what was on the menu so that I would be knowledgeable in what I was eating. I was beginning to think that my lunch on that day would consist of a bag of

potato chips and a can of soda. But off in the distance, like a bright star shining over the place announcing the place of Jesus' birth, I found my salvation! It was the Golden Arches, yes, a McDonald's! I quickly made my way to McDonald's, envisioning what I would be able to order and eat.

When I entered the place I quickly began to sweat, because this McDonald's was not like anything I had encountered back in the States, for, you see, the menu was in German! Now this was before the time of picture menus and combo meals, so I approached the counter, looking up at the menu board, trying to ascertain what in the world they were offering. I didn't want a hamburger, because, after all, this was the time of the Mad Cow scare in England, and I didn't want to possibly order tainted beef. I quickly decided that fish would be my order of the day, so I quickly found on the menu the word that looked like fish.

Being a plain kind of guy, I usually order my filet of fish with only cheese, but my thoughts were interrupted by the sweet, gentle voice of a young Asian woman. "Bitte", she said. Bitte, I knew that meant please, here was a person ready and willing to take my order! But how would I communicate to her what I wanted? She spoke German, I did not. So in my best broken English I tried to explain: "I would like a plain fish, cheese only, no tarter, fries, and a large diet coke." She gave me a puzzled look so I tried again: "I

would like a plain fish, cheese only, no tarter, fries, and a large diet coke.” She tilted her head, looking at me as if I had just gotten off of a space ship. This was not going well. “I would like a plain fish, cheese only, no tarter, fries, and a large diet coke.”

She looked at me and smiled, and motioned to me to come closer. I leaned in to hear what she had to say and she whispered in my ear: “”Sir..... I.....speak.....English.”

You can imagine my relief! Someone who knew the language that I spoke, someone who would talk to me in words that I knew, and in a manner I could understand. My heart was at peace, my soul was joyful, and my need was satisfied.

The two most important questions that human beings have is to ask if there is a God and if God exists, what does He have to do with me? Since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, human beings have been separated from God. Sin separates men, women, and children from a holy and just God. God is holy, He is perfect, and He requires perfection from all that He has created. However, you and I are sinful to the core, our hearts and lives at odds with what God commands and desires. God says to fear, love, and trust in Him first and foremost, that our love and commitment to God is to be preeminent. God is King and is to receive first place in our lives.

But look at your life, your mixed up priorities, remember the times when you worried instead of trusting in Him, of when you shortchanged God and others by putting yourself and your needs first. God tells you to love your neighbor as yourself, but you go on living your life as if you mattered the most, not being concerned in the least with the needs of those around you. Your life has been marked by selfishness and self centeredness. The question many, not all, but many have on their minds this Christmas is this: what will I get for Christmas, or to put it another way, what will you get ME for Christmas? The Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not the God many Americans worship today, instead, the god is named me, myself, and I.

The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. Sin has entered the world and death has spread to all people. Death is the common denominator for every person. Death continually stares us in the face. Death and the fear of death is like a pall that covers all of creation. In this life, where we are daily confronted with death, and in this life where our language is not Godlike but communicates prejudice, anger, rage, hatred, and violence. We see it in the senseless killings in the inner city and in the violence that is seemingly all around. But no one is immune to death. Death comes to all of us, and none of us get to choose how we are going to die or when we are going to die. In the midst of living we are dead people walking. Who will save us from death?

Thanks be to God, the Good News of Christmas is this: To you is born in the city of David a Savior, He is Christ the Lord. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, God speaks to sinners in His Son, Jesus! Because of Jesus we hear, we experience, we see and we know God. Today's focus is on Jesus is the Word. God makes Himself audible. God makes Himself heard. We hear God when we hear what He says about Jesus, we hear God when we listen to Jesus. God gives you Jesus, His Word made flesh, and because you have Jesus, you have everything you need. God speaks to you and calms your troubled heart in Jesus, for Jesus says: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." To the anxious God speaks to you in Jesus and says: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." To the dying, God speaks to you in Jesus and assures you that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. To the guilt ridden you have God's Word in Jesus who forgives you your sins and cleanses you from all unrighteousness. And to the fearful God speaks to you in Jesus telling you not to be afraid for the Lord will never leave you nor forsake you, so you can say with confidence that the Lord is your Help, you need never be afraid.

God gives you Himself and God gives you His Word in Jesus, and because of Jesus you can know for certain that nothing will ever separate you from His

love. For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Amen.