

“THE WORD WAS GOD”
Isaiah 9:1-7, Hebrews 1:1-8, John 1:1-14
November 26 & 27, 2022

Paul Harvey, radio host of “*The Rest of the Story*,” once told this wonderful account:

“One raw winter night the man heard an irregular thumping sound against the kitchen storm door. He went to a window and watched as tiny, shivering sparrows, attracted to the evident warmth inside, beat in vain against the glass.

“Touched, the farmer bundled up and trudged through fresh snow to open the barn for the struggling birds. He turned on the lights, tossed some hay in a corner, and sprinkled a trail of saltine crackers to direct them to the barn. But the sparrows, which had scattered in all directions when he emerged from the house, still hid in the darkness, afraid of him.

“He tried various tactics: circling behind the birds to drive them toward the barn, tossing cracker crumbs in the air toward them, retreating to his house to see if they’d flutter into the barn on their own. Nothing worked. He, a huge alien creature, had terrified them; the birds could not understand that he actually desired to help.

“He withdrew to his house finally and watched the doomed sparrows through a window. As he stared, a thought hit him like lightning from a clear blue sky: ‘If only I could become a bird - one of them - just for a moment. Then I wouldn’t frighten them so. I could show them the way to warmth and safety.’ At the same moment, another thought dawned on him. He had comprehended the whole principle of the Incarnation.

“A man’s becoming a bird is nothing compared to God’s becoming a man. The concept of a sovereign being as big as the universe He created, confining Himself to a human body was - and is - too much for some people to believe.”¹ But oh, what a wonderful thing He did for us.

On this first Sunday of Advent, I want to help us to understand the great love of God for all of humanity. Let me give you this overview. Having created all things through the power of His Word,

¹ (Compiled by Alice Gray, *More Stories for the Heart*, [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1997] pg. 234)

God sat down and designed a man in God's own likeness, gave life to him, breathed into him and established him here on the Earth with all the plants and animals - all he could ever want. It became evident, however, that the man was alone, so God created woman out of the man, that together they could comfort and encourage and support each other in the work that God had created them to do. And God saw that it was all very good (Genesis 1-2).

But then, something happened that forever changed the fate of humanity. The man and the woman disobeyed God and caused sin to forever destroy the design that God had made of all things (Genesis 3). That sin caused a separation between all of creation and God, and ultimately cast all people away from the warmth and safety and security of God.

Ever since that fateful day, God has planned a way for us to come once more into the beauty of His presence. Since nothing we could do on our own would bring us back into God's perfect holiness, God decided that He would make an everlasting pathway back to Him; a doorway, so-to-speak, allowing all who would enter through it to come again into His presence, renewed and redeemed, from sin to salvation. Here's how it works.

Throughout the Old Testament we hear God calling for His people to "come home," but the people thought they knew better than God, so they lived in the darkness of this world according to their own ways instead. Over and over again God sent messengers to the people to call them back to Him and follow His ways, but every time they refused. So at just the right time in the history of the world, God put His perfect plan of saving grace into effect. And it was a tremendously vulnerable thing for Him to do. God sent His Own Son, Jesus, to us, to make one more passionate plea for us to come back home.

Now, it had been prophesied many times about Jesus' uniqueness and about His role in the saving of humanity. Isaiah 9 is just one of the revelations of God's great plan to save humanity from the consequences of their sins. While generations lived in the darkness of sin here in the world, God was preparing His great Light to come and provide us with hope and life, IF we would only trust in Him and follow His commands. God would not do this great work in the strength of man, nor through the

wisdom of man, but He would do something so wonderful and unique that certainly it would change the world.

God decided that He would become like us in every way, yet without sin, in order to show us His pathway back into His presence. A child would be born, a son would be delivered (Is. 9:6), Who would become God's righteousness for us to follow. But not just any son; God Himself would become human and would then be able to speak with us, and share the wonderful things of God with us, and even guide us back into the safety of His protection. And He would establish a kingdom here on the earth that would last forever. What a marvelous promise from God!

The writer of Hebrews states it well, *"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, who He appointed heir of all things, and through whom also He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word..."* (Heb. 1:1-3a). Jesus, the Son of God, became human like us, fully human and yet fully God, to once more invite us back to God so that we could be saved from death because of our sin.

Since the majesty of God is too much for us to comprehend (see Exodus 20:18-19), Jesus came in our form so as not to scare us. He willingly stepped down from heaven for a little while so that He could become flesh and blood like us, to live among us, and to show us the majesty of God in ways that we could begin to comprehend. Jesus became human out of love for every one of us, so that we might not be separated from the Lord God Almighty any more, but be able to come into His presence with great joy and praise.

Now Jesus did not come merely to tell us about God. The prophets had done that throughout the ages. No, Jesus came as God with us, shining out the radiance of heaven upon the earth, and demonstrating the exact character of God before us. Not in some huge, supernatural way that would blow our minds and be so mysterious that we could not comprehend it. Jesus lived as God here among us, *"the exact representation of His being,"* in such a way that we might become attracted to Him and

begin once more to follow His will and His ways. Jesus lived God among us, like one of us, so that we might not be scared away, but rather fall in love with God once more in order to conform our own ways to His. Since we were not willing to listen to the men God spoke through, God sent Jesus as God in human form so that we could see the difference in how He lived and then we could put our trust in Him.

Now, God had given us His commands, His laws that guide us and keep our lives in order. His desire was to help us to recognize the frailty of ourselves to live in a way that pleased God on our own. God's laws and commands are for us so that they may protect us and enable us to live with each other in peace and harmony. But over time, those laws themselves were overwritten by our own laws and commands that began to divide us and perpetuate our sinfulness. Even the priests in the temple and the teachers of the Law began to manipulate those laws so that they would bring advantage to some and disadvantage to others. It had now become a game of thrones, with the strongest ones in power over the weaker ones. And the ones with power interpreted the law for their advantage to stay in control over the others. So rather than drawing all people to God, it became a matter of the best man winning becoming the one who called all the shots. This only left the people in worse shape with every succeeding leader.

Even when the nation of Israel endured 70 years of exile from their own country, it was not enough to shake them up and get them to conform to God's ways. Oh, there would be resurgence in following God from time to time, trying to reform and become consistent with God's standards, but as time passed, the leaders kept taking the people away from the Lord God Almighty into the worship of imaginary gods.

Jesus came as the very essence of God Himself, in order to open our eyes to see the futility of our ways and to embrace the fullness of God once more. So as the exact representation of God's glory exposed the error of our ways, disclosed the misinterpretation of God's laws and uncovered the false teachings that were being given "in the name of the Lord," the radiance of God's glory shown through Jesus was to help us to correct our deviant course and sustain us once more to follow the ways of the Lord God.

But where did Jesus get that radiance? How did He become the exact representation of God's glory? Who was He to become the example for us to enable us to find God's path to Salvation? Listen to the way that the Gospel of John describes Jesus' role. This is John 1:1-14. (READ John 1:1-14)

John's introduction to his Gospel takes us back to the very beginning, before any of creation had been accomplished. As in Genesis 1 we remember that "*the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*" (1:2). God was there in all of His power and eminence. And His Spirit filled the emptiness.

But then God spoke, and the Word of His mouth brought about all that God desired. God's creative power initiated the act of creation through His spoken Word. And the Word brought about all that God desired to do. The Word brought the thought of God into being, making visible all that He intended. The Word was there with God even before the universe came into being and as God desired, the Word made everything come into being.

John uses this Greek term "Logos" to describe the all-powerful nature of God, and he uses the "Word" as the representation of Jesus being with God at the very beginning. Jesus was not created, but was with God in all of His fullness, present with God at the very beginning of what we know of in the universe. And Jesus was with God, indicating that He was both equal to God, but yet distinctly separate in His identity in His association with God. They were coexistent, one with the other, and their Spirit moved forth from their presence, impacting all things.

John is telling us that the "Word" was deity, one with God, rather than "a god" or another being of the same class.² The Word was God, and brought about creation in the precise way that God designed it. Everything was made as it was through God, and the Word enacted it as God gave the command. Whenever God spoke the different parts of creation, the Word made it come into existence. Without the Word, nothing would have come into being. It was through the Word that all beings had life, from sea creatures, to plants, to animals and birds, even onto humans. The Word made it all happen

² (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank Gaebelin, editor, [Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1981] pg. 28)

just as God planned.

John is explaining Jesus' role in the very nature of God, being the exact representation of God, filled with His Spirit, and shining forth His Glory that gives light to the whole world and life to all that is. He is making a great distinction between Jesus and any other "man-made" god in that Jesus is one with God in every way, and makes all that God has planned come into being. And His uniqueness is that, at just the right time in the history of the earth, Jesus, being in the fullness of God, confined Himself into the minuteness of a single cell, that would develop into a human being, so that He could not only be in the fullness of God, but be in the very likeness of man, yet without sin.

So, though Jesus was the Word of God, in the very nature and power of God, He humbled himself to become like us so that we could understand God and begin to obey Him once more. He brought the Light of God into the world so that we might not have to rely upon our own sense of right and wrong, but follow God's design of right and wrong. Jesus came to open our eyes to how we might live according to God's laws and find God's presence with us again. Jesus came to give us hope and real life by turning our hearts and minds back to the ways of the Lord God.

G. Campbell Morgan states it like this in his book, *The Cries of the Christ*: "He was the God-man. Not God indwelling a man. Of such there have been many. Not a man deified. Of such there have been none save in the myths of pagan systems of thought; but God and man, combining in one personality the two natures, a perpetual enigma and mystery, baffling the possibility of explanation."³

But here's the crazy part of it all. Though Jesus came as the Word, though He had been a part of the creation of the world, those in the world did not recognize Him as the Word. His deity was too much for the people to fully comprehend Him. And had He shown up here on the earth in the fullness of God's glory, it would have been too much for them to comprehend the necessity of His sacrifice for us.

Just think about it for a moment - throughout His life, Jesus demonstrated that He had control over everything here on the earth. He had the power to calm a raging storm. He had the ability to walk

³ (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998] pg. 315)

on water. He had the power to heal any and all diseases. He had the power and authority to right anything that was wrong with a human being, giving strength to the lame man, straightening the hunched back of the stooped-over woman in the Temple, giving sight to a man born blind, and even raising those who had died back to life. Carefully, Jesus demonstrated that He was the Word, who brought all things to being, knowing much more about us than we could ever know about ourselves. He knew the history of the woman at the well in Samaria. He knew the thoughts of the Pharisees. He knew that Nathanael was sitting under a fig tree before Philip called him to follow Jesus. He knew the sins of the woman who anointed His feet with oil, and had the authority to forgive her sins. And Jesus allowed the three disciples to see His true glorified nature while they were on the mountain top. And Jesus had the authority to cast out demons, and to even defeat Satan himself when He was tempted by him.

Jesus came among His own creation, but the people not only missed Who He was, but rejected Him as anything but a magician. Instead of listening to the prophecies about Him and recognize Him as God's Messiah, the leaders of the Church rejected Jesus and refused to claim Him as the Word of God. Even after Jesus rose from the dead, the leaders hardened their hearts against God and led the people against Him.

But there were some, the faithful remnant, who recognized Jesus as the Word, God's own Son come to set the people free from the penalty of sin's separation from God. They observed Jesus' actions; they listened to His teachings; they allowed the Holy Spirit to open their hearts and minds to receive Jesus as the Word of God; they believed that He was the Messiah, the Christ; and God responded by calling them His very own children.

Jesus recognized our dire situation of being like sparrows trapped in the cold darkness of this world, outside of the warmth and light of God the Father. He knew our inability to do anything in our own power to come back into God's presence because of our sin. So Jesus knew that the only way that we could find safety and peace and protection with God again was if He would come to us and live among us and tell us about the wonderful things of God, and to show us God's pathway back to Him. In

a mighty demonstration of His great love for us, Jesus followed God's desire, and used His authority as the Word of God to take our form, and became flesh and dwelt among us. Knowing full well that the only way that our sin could be atoned and our souls freed from the penalty of that sin (death), Jesus became the Servant of God, willing to give His life as a sacrifice for all the sins of the world, so that whoever would believe in Him would not have to face eternal destruction in God's absence (hell), but would be redeemed by His own blood in order to receive eternal life. *"For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him"* (John 3:17).

That is the importance of us understanding that Jesus was the Word in the very beginning with God, and that He IS the Word as God with us. He did not come to the world to bring peace to the world, but to call all people to Himself, which thereby causes divisions among us, bringing hatred of those who refuse to receive Him against those who will believe in Him and receive Him as the Savior of the World, Jesus the Christ. Though we are all His creation, we only become children of God as we trust in Him as our Messiah, the One who has come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

On this first weekend of the Advent season, *"let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in [Jesus]"* as our Savior and Lord (John 14:1). Do not languish in the darkness of this world any more, but come into the Light of the Lord, understanding all that the Lord our God has done for us to save us and bring us back home with Him once more. Live for Jesus and let His light shine through you to those around you so that they may come to see Him, too. To the glory of the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. Let's pray...

Father God, we praise You for the greatness of Your creation, for making us all in Your image so that we could bring honor and glory back to You. Thank You for sending us Your Word, so that we might believe in Him and receive Him. Forgive us of all that we have done to disobey Your Laws and Commands, for we have failed to obey Your Word. Today, God, we do the tough work of giving up on our own selves, giving up our place in this world with all its delights and false promises, to humble ourselves under Your Almighty hand and become childlike to receive Jesus as our Savior. Help us to trust that He is Your very Word, with You in the beginning, one with You in all things, so that He might become our Savior. He gave His life for us so that we could be with Him, here on this earth as well as in heaven with You. Let Your Holy Spirit pour out upon us today, that we might find ourselves as living witnesses of the love of Christ in our world, so that through Him, we may draw all people back to You. This we pray in Jesus' Name. AMEN.