

JOHN 1 : 10 – 13
HE CAME !

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

If your uncle, or brother, or cousin, who is high up in big city life and its luxury, said he would come to visit you out on the prairie in a couple months to help with your engine overhaul, or your house add-on, or work with the cattle; and if you had your doubts that it would happen; but yet in a couple months who shows up at your door to help?! What would you say? “He came! Unbelievable—he came!” ---- In Advent, as we digest the fact that Jesus came! to our “house,” to planet earth, not for vacation, but to accomplish that which we sorely needed, we too shout, “He came!”

The text says *Jesus was in the world, and the world was made through Him.* How truly unexpected and amazing that He would come here! John says He was in the world. He did not come to be treated like royalty. He came to put on your shoes and walk in your steps, to get besmudged with your dirt—whether you are man or woman, dad or a mom, husband or wife, boy or girl—each with very different roles and life tools. He came to help—to help YOU, who don’t even qualify for His help. (We are sinners all.) How strange that He Who made the world would come to be in the world. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, regarding whom Solomon said, “The heaven of heavens cannot contain You!” (I Kings 8:27). Yet He came—to be “in” this world, not in a mystical or spiritual sort of way, but in a physical bodily way—all the while true God. It was be like a man who built a miniature community out of modeling clay or play dough and then actually himself became a clay or playdough figure to improve their lot. A little bit “over the top,” right?

That is the marvel of what we are preparing to celebrate. Christmas: Immanuel—God with us—born of virgin mother. He said, “Touch me and see,” to His disciples after His resurrection, “a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39). He is “true Godhead incarnate” as we sing in O, Come, All Ye Faithful (TLH 102 v. 4). Sometimes the word “incarnate” is tough to process. Incarnate means “in the flesh.” “Carnal” desires are fleshly desires. Jesus was God “incarnate.” God in the flesh. The incarnation of Jesus was His becoming fully man. The incarnation of Jesus was His being conceived and born through the virgin Mary. A wonder our minds can’t really process. ---- It’s easier, isn’t it, to turn Christmas into some physical celebration—festive meals, family gatherings, gifts in boxes. Such is a dodge from the non-understandable real Christmas. Jesus came to us in this world.

The world did not know Him. Like the playdough builder becoming a playdough man himself, Jesus entered this world; but the world did not know Him. The world did not “know” Jesus. We use the word “know” in two different senses—1) to recognize and 2) to understand. It’s like saying, “Oh, I know that lady over there. That’s Flora Peters. But I really don’t know her.” You recognize her, but you don’t understand that she is a mother patient with her children, a friend caring for her neighbors, a Christian lady devoted to the Word and her Savior. The world did “know” Jesus, recognize Him as Jesus of Nazareth, as the world still does today. But they did not “know” Jesus, understand Him, as the Son of God and their Savior—as the world still does not today—although miracle after miracle shouted otherwise. Why did the world not know Jesus? Because the world was so wrapped up in itself and in every carrot that the devil dangled before them to take their eyes off the Savior, whom God had promised to send.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. It’s not like He was too different for them to recognize that He was God and their loving, compassionate, merciful, forgiving, rescuing Savior. He was not too different. He had come to His own, to those who knew from the Old Testament who the Lord was, what the Lord had done, said, and promised. He had not entered somebody else’s world where He was be a foreigner and an unknown, totally out of sync with the place. He had come to His own. In the example, if the needy playdough people could see that this new playdough man could do anything and everything to help them, that he knew their weaknesses and wayward hearts, and yet loved them and gave himself for them; they would have concluded this was none-other than their own maker and helper and rescuer, even though they didn’t expect Him quite this way. *He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.* They did not take Him in and retain Him, hold to Him, as being their special gift, Savior, and friend.

Jesus came to the world. He came to us. He knew the sinful world would never be able to come to Him. He initiated and fulfilled the restoring of the relationship. Think of a teacher at school, a clerk in the store, a doctor at the clinic, or a dad or mom at home. “Sir, ma’am, daughter, son, would you like help with that? They see your struggles and frustration and maybe even desperation. They come to you, “Would you like some help?” Why say No to the store clerk, the doctor, your parents? Sometimes it’s a heart fearful to admit inadequacy. Sometimes it’s the pride that doesn’t want to read the directions or to ask for directions. Sometimes it’s a matter of resentment—the others didn’t cooperate with my approach last time we tried to work together, why should I ask them, this time. *His own did not receive Him.*

Will you turn away from Jesus this Advent and Christmas, the Jesus who came to save you, to provide forgiveness for your wrongs? Remember, those wrongs can never be righted. When the window pane is broken, the window pane is broken. It can be replaced, but not fixed. It can only be forgiven. Jesus is your forgiveness. What better help is there? Will you turn away from Him this Advent and Christmas? Granted, to celebrate Christmas and His “incarnation” on this earth, born at Bethlehem, and placed in a cattle fodder box / feed trough, is not commanded by God in the Bible. You do not have to celebrate the birth of the Savior. But if you are in fact celebrating a holiday named “Christ”mas, don’t ignore Him or fail to receive Him.

He may not reach out to you again! We do think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who searches and searches for lost sheep. He is and does. But Jesus’ patience also runs out. Consider: God hardened Pharaoh’s persistent unbelieving heart. Consider: when the people of Gadara, who lost 2000 pigs because healed a maniac sort of a demon-possessed man, the same people of Gadara asked Jesus to leave. We do not read that He ever went back—though He did leave the healed man there to bear witness. Consider: Jesus sent out the disciples and told them, that if a household should reject them and their message of Christ, the disciples should shake the dust of that house off their sandals as they left. I heard of an elderly pastor who actually did that. You are celebrating Christmas this year. Do not fail to “know” Jesus with your rejoicing on the inside and on the outside. You do not want Him to leave you. Then you’ll be on the outside looking in.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. Clinging to Jesus, believing in Jesus, is more than just believing that He exists. It is trusting Him as your only “pass” into heaven. You have been justified, pronounced Not Guilty! through Him. Believing in Him you are no longer bums of the street, but adopted the children of God! You are reborn from sin into righteousness.

John says, *you are born—not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* This birth is not any kind of physical re-birth accompanied by the blood of delivery. It’s not any kind of physical birth driven by a man’s lust. It’s not any kind of physical birth initiated by a husband’s will and love. It is a spiritual birth, outside of the physical realm, produced through God’s promise of GRACE in His Word, carried out through His Son and worked in your heart by the Holy Spirit. “Even when we were dead in trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved!” (Ephesians 2:5). By grace, what a future you have! Sons and daughters of God! What a celebration Christmas is! HE CAME FOR YOU!

May your Advent and Christmas be about the amazing Savior!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---