

Christmas According to John
The Uniqueness of Christmas
John 1:14-18
December 24, 2017

Christmas is a unique and meaningful time of the year. We have been busy with Christmas programs, gatherings, and endless shopping. Now we are looking forward to time with family and friends, meals and sweets made once a year, opening gifts, and Christmas music playing in the background. These are all good and enjoyable things but let me suggest that we settle for far too little meaning in Christmas if this is all there is. Christmas is so much more unique and meaningful than all these good and festive activities. Christmas has far more to offer so I want to spend a few minutes considering the Uniqueness of Christmas story, of Immanuel, God with us, from the gospel of John, 1:14-18.

The other gospel accounts describe the events surrounding the birth of Immanuel but John tells us most clearly the uniqueness of Immanuel, whom John describes as the Word. He opens his gospel with "in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." The word is the eternal Son of God who was with God for all eternity. Out of all the terms he could use to describe the Son, he chose the Word. Why? Words are the clearest expression of who we are. You can tell a lot about a person by what they say. Many of us recognize each other tonight from around town but we do not necessarily know each other. We may acknowledge each other with a nod or a smile because we recognize each other but we don't really know each other because we have not met or talked to each other. Words are how we know and communicate with each other. We may even know information about each other but we don't actually know someone until we meet and talk and interact with our words. The same is true with God. You know God through the word. What makes Christmas unique is that it tells us that we can only know God through the Word. That is why verse 18 tells us, "No one has ever seen God; the only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." Jesus, the Word, makes God known to us. What makes Christmas unique is that that you can only know God through the Word.

Some of us may be thinking, I don't believe that you can only know God through Jesus Christ. But this kind of response is based upon a belief system you hold that may or may not be true. Most of us never question our own belief system and we freely reject another belief system without ever having considered if they are true or not. So, if you have never considered the truth of Christianity, it is worth considering Jesus' claim that he is the only way to know God. What makes Christmas unique is that that you can only know God through the word.

T Second, he tells us that the word became flesh and dwelt among us. That is, the Word became he became human, soft, tangible. He exposed himself to risk, made him vulnerable, and even made him killable. I heard about the death of Kittie Genovese recently. In 1964 at 2:30 am in Queens, New York, Kittie Genovese drove home from work, parking 100 feet from her apartment. Walking toward her apartment a man with a hunting knife approached. Kittie ran toward her apartment but the man overtook her and stabbed her twice in the back. She screamed, "he stabbed me, help me!" Several neighbors heard her and turned on their lights to look. One neighbor even shouted at the attacker to leave her alone. Fearing that someone was going to come down, the attacker ran off. Kittie slowly struggled toward her apartment. The attacker returned ten minutes later and realizing no one came down, he found Kittie. He stabbed her several more times, stole \$49, and left her for dead. Though there are conflicting reports, up to 38 heard or saw something but no one came down. It was too risky, too threatening to leave the safety of their apartments. But God came down, despite the threat, and despite the risk. Even more incredible, God came down to die. What makes Christmas unique is that God became man, became killable.

Last, John says, we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus' followers saw glory in the word became flesh, they recognized that he was more than a man. Jesus was Immanuel, God with us; the Word, the eternal Son of God. Glory is a word to describe God's splendor and beauty. This glory is then described as full of grace and truth. Grace

that overcomes the gap created by human sin. The Word came to close the gap between God and man. If you have experienced a significant injustice from another person, say someone has betrayed you, violated you, hurt you, a relational gap is created between the two of you. The greater the offense, the greater the gap. And the perpetrator saying sorry doesn't just fix it. Sometimes the gap is so large that it takes years to overcome and sometimes it is never repaired. Either the pain is too great or the offender has not taken responsibility or sought forgiveness. The gap between us and God is infinitely greater yet God became flesh to overcome that gap. What makes Christmas unique is that is God overcame the gap caused by our sin to reconcile us to God