

Christmas 1

December 30, 2018

Rev Ken Wratten at St Luke's

Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3

Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7

John 1:1-18: The Word was with God, and the Word was God. The true light was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him.

How each Synoptic Gospel account begins:

Matthew – Birth of Jesus

Mark – Baptism of Jesus, and he begins his ministry

Luke – Birth of John the Baptist and Jesus foretold to Elizabeth and Mary, then John is born, then Jesus is born

Then there is the prologue in John's Gospel – Jesus is the Word.

John (the theologian) takes us to a heavenly perspective on the importance of the birth of the baby Jesus. It is high theology, and it is easy for the lessons this Sunday to get very complicated very quickly. But there is an important dimension here of who Jesus was. John's prologue explains the significance of Christmas that I had never heard until I took courses in seminary. Let's see where John is taking us.

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word. Compared to...

Gen 1:1 – In the beginning God created.

"In the beginning was the Word." He was with God the Father from before time. He is God the Son. "Through him (the Word) all things were made." The Word of God is how God's will was expressed in creation.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." God the Son came to live with us, became one of us, God the Son was Jesus Christ. Eternal and timeless God became finite and temporal in the human baby Jesus. He set aside his divinity and became just like us. Theologians tell us that he was 100% human, and was at the same time 100% divine. It had to be that way.

He had to be fully human so that he could be an effective model of the way God wants all of us to live. He also had to be fully human so that his death was real – and not just an appearance – as he paid that ultimate price for the sins of us all.

He had to also be fully divine so that his sacrifice carried the power to reconcile all of humanity to become children of God.

John wrote, “We have seen his glory.” The term used for ‘glory’ in this passage is related to the word that describes God’s appearance in the Tent of Meeting that is described in Exodus (33:7-11), “Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the ‘tent of meeting.’ Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses... The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.”

God the Son came to us and dwelled with us. Through him we see God’s glory, similar to the way the Israelites saw the glory of God at the Tent of Meeting. Hebrews 1:3, “³The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...”

Jesus is our Tent of Meeting. He is our place to go, to experience God dwelling among us. He is our place to go, to see God’s glory.

Jesus was God the Son, one person of our triune God, who came to earth as a human being, so that we could experience his glory. He came to dwell among us, to offer us a living, preaching, teaching, healing Tent of Meeting. At the Ascension, God the Son returned to his full divine nature.

And so we see the eternal significance of the baby born on Christmas. He is the glory of God, he lived among us; and through his Spirit he dwells in us.

As this 12-day long journey continues through the season of Christmastide, let’s keep celebrating - the Word who created;

the baby whose first bed was a feeding trough in a stable;

the man who was baptized by John in the Jordan River;

and the Lord of our lives who taught us how important it is to serve each other, and who sacrificed himself to make each of us worthy to stand in the presence of God.
