

1.3.21 C2 The Word Became Flesh and Lived Among Us

- When one year ends, and another begins, we often look back and review the events of the year gone by – and frankly looking back, 2020 was pretty bad
 - Every year some notable people die
 - This year notable deaths included Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, actor Chadwick Boseman, and television Jeopardy host Alex Trebek
 - As for events, the death of Black citizens like George Floyd who kept saying he couldn't breathe, and Breonna Taylor who was shot and killed in a mistaken police raid, as well as too many others, sparked peaceful mass protests on the best days, and violent riots on the worst. Meanwhile, 45 police officers were killed by gunfire last year.
 - Late in 2020, November's presidential election and everything that followed it, made this election the nastiest one in American history
 - And of course, since March there has been the appalling illness, death, and economic destruction brought on by the coronavirus pandemic
 - To sum it up, 2020 was a terrible year, and so it's not surprising that one of the best-selling Christmas tree ornaments this year on Etsy, the craft and small business website, has been a Christmas ornament of a trash dumpster with flames shooting out of it, and with the year 2020 written across the bottom
 - Yes, the year 2020 has been pretty much a dumpster fire
 - And the Gospel of John that we heard in today's reading would agree
 - The Gospel of John as a whole is filled with a series of sharply contrasting opposites
 - John draws a sharp contrast between unbelief and belief
 - The Gospel of John contrasts death and life
 - And as we heard in today's scripture, John contrasts darkness and light
 - And so from heaven down to earth, into a world with more unbelief than belief, and into the darkness of sin and into the darkness of this broken world came God's light

- This light of God was not a mere symbol, this light was not a blinding flash of light, this light of God, the eternal Word of God, took on flesh and came down to live among us as the father's only son [1:14]
- We are so used to hearing and picturing Christmas taking place with the Christ-child lying in a manger – and that is true!
- But for the Gospel of John, Christmas is the very Word of God that spoke the world into being, and which became a human being like us in order to live here among us
- Here is what the Gospel of John says: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. [1:14]”
- The Word of God becoming flesh in today's gospel is every bit as much the Christmas story as the shepherds and the angels, Mary and Joseph, and the manger and infant Jesus
- So the Word became flesh and lived among us, and some years later, John the Baptist declared that this person was Jesus the Messiah
 - But not only was Jesus light for a world in darkness and distress, Jesus the Word made flesh also came down to change us
 - To everyone who receives him and believes in him, Jesus adopts them as sons and daughters of God to receive grace upon grace!
 - This means that Christmas is not just an historical event in the past, Christmas is a gift of God that continues for generation after generation
 - Christmas, the Word of God made flesh to come into the world STILL makes a difference
 - The Word of God continues to call sons and daughters into faith rather than unbelief, light instead of darkness, and life instead of death
 - And so the Word of God continues give and bestow grace upon grace
- WHAT THIS MEANS, is that the year 2020 as terrible as it was, was more than dumpster fire
 - Despite all that has gone wrong in the world or in our lives, Jesus who lived and died and was raised in this world

continues to love not just the world, but the people who live in it – including us

- And looking ahead to 2021, this New Year has even more hope than a vaccine
 - A vaccine would be great
 - Sickness and death from the pandemic should eventually decline
 - Fear will someday subside and lives will return to some kind of new normal
- But most importantly, 2020 was not without hope, and 2021 has hope even deeper than a vaccine, because God continues to call and love sons and daughters, and give grace upon grace even when last year looks like a dumpster fire and 2021 begins in a pandemic