

He Came to His Own (John 1:10-13)

On this Lord's Day, just before we celebrate our 2015 version of Christmas, I feel led to take a one-week break from our study of the Book of Colossians. I don't often preach topical sermons, especially on Sunday morning, but it just seems right to focus on that one amazing gift God gave us: Jesus entering the world as a human baby.

The Gospel of Luke gives us the most detailed account of our Lord's birth and Matthew follows closely behind. Combining the two, we get a great Christmas story. So it's not surprising at all that pastors in pulpits across the world would be turning to those pages this morning. But this year, I want us to look at John's account.

John strips away all the details of Jesus' birth. He barely mentions prophecy and then only of John the Baptist. He doesn't talk about shepherds or angels. He doesn't mention Mary and Joseph. He doesn't talk about the journey to Bethlehem. He doesn't even talk about a baby in a manger. He focuses on what has to be the most critical, incredible, gracious, central fact of the incarnation.

His birth story comes to clear focus in verse 14 of the first chapter.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

In fact, I think we can distill this fact down even further with just four critically important words:

Ho logos ginomai sarx (ὁ λόγος γίνομαι σὰρξ) The Word became flesh.

The Word, of course, identifies Christ Jesus. This is not a word spoken or a word written on a page. This is a word that comes from Greek philosophy. It refers to the sum total of all knowledge behind a spoken idea. It refers to the cosmic consciousness behind all of creation. It refers to God.

Jesus Christ is God. He is God the Son. The writer of Hebrews describes Him as ...

...the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, ... (Hebrews 1:3)

That is exactly why John opens this very gospel with these words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

Jesus is very God of very God. He has all the attributes of Godhood and He is eminently worthy of our praise and worship.

Ho logos ginomai sarx

The Word became flesh.

Jesus Christ, the very Agent of all creation, entered His creation as a human baby, born exactly as you and I were born. He experienced all the same temptations we experience. Yet He lived a life completely without sin, the only, perfect, sinless human life ever lived and then He took that life to the cross. He was tortured and killed to pay for my sins. He endured the wrath of God to pay for your sins, and the sins of all who would believe.

That's why we celebrate His birth, because without His birth, He could not have taken on humanity. Without His birth, He could not have died and we would be completely without hope. We would have nothing to look forward to but an eternity of torment in hell.

The Word became flesh.

But the question is, will you receive Him? Humanity is forever divided by that question. Sadly, many will answer "no". Only those who answer "yes" will reap eternal blessing.

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. (John 1:10-13)

Take a closer look at verse 10.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. (John 1:10)

Jesus entered His creation. By His birth He entered into the world He spoke into existence. But verse 10 is not talking about the cosmos in general, the stars, the planets, all the critters, or fish, or insects; this verse is speaking specifically of humanity as a whole. And humanity, as a whole, did not recognize Him. Humanity did not acknowledge Him. They certainly didn't glorify Him or worship Him. They missed Him completely.

It was true in the First Century and it is true today. The vast majority of people in the world do not acknowledge Him as their Lord and Savior. In fact, a large number of people who consider themselves Christians do not truly acknowledge Him as their Lord.

"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)

There are many people who call Jesus Lord, but they refuse to submit to His Lordship. If Jesus is truly your Lord, then you are His *dulos* – His bondservant, His slave.

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Your Christianity must not be just an ornament you add to your life. This time of year, many of us place ornaments on an evergreen tree to dress it up. But those ornaments do not change the fundamental nature of the tree. If you wear your Christianity as an ornament, it will not give you the peace and joy Jesus promises us. To experience that, your Christianity must saturate every aspect of your life. Because Jesus is Lord.

The world did not recognize the Creator when He came. But even more tragic ...

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. (John 1:11)

The Nation Israel was specifically chosen by God to be His particular people. They had a tremendous advantage. In Deuteronomy, Moses is addressing the nation and he says:

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 7:6)

In his letter to the Romans, Paul asks a rhetorical question: What advantage, then, has the Jew? And then he answers:

Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. (Romans 3:2)

God spoke to us through the nation Israel and we have His words recorded for us in the Old Testament. The Nation Israel transmitted God's word to us and the whole thing points to Jesus. From the opening chapters of Genesis where God makes this promise to our enemy:

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." (Genesis 3:15)

Genesis 3:15 speaks of Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman. And then at the very end of the Old Testament, we find the prophet Malachi, and we read:

But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. (Malachi 4:2)

Jesus, Himself, said of our Old Testament:

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39)

The oracles of God testified of the coming Messiah. And Jesus came to us through the Nation Israel. He was the descendent of king David after the flesh ... both on His mother's side and also, legally, on His human father's side. I say legally, because Joseph was not His biological father. He was born of the Holy Spirit. Israel was His own family.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. (John 1:11)

But as many as received Him (John 1:12)

Sometimes the word "but" is incredibly glorious in the Bible. Humanity at large didn't recognize Jesus. The nation Israel as a whole didn't recognize Jesus. But ... there are individual exceptions. There are those who do receive Him.

You cannot be saved simply because you are a genetic descendant of Jacob. You cannot be saved because you were born to a Christian nation. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a Christian nation. Because you cannot be saved by your nationality. And you can't be saved because you were born to a Christian family. Having Christian parents is a great blessing. But I don't care how faithful and devout your mother and father are, you cannot be saved by your genetics. You are awesomely responsible for what you do with Jesus Christ. You either reject Jesus, or you accept Jesus; there is no middle ground.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, (John 1:12)

What a Christmas gift!

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in

the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

When we submit to Jesus, we don't just have our sins forgiven. That would be enough. That would be infinitely more than we deserve. But when we accept Christ, we are adopted as sons and daughters into God's own family.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:15-17)

How does that happen?

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, **to those who believe in His name:** (John 1:12)*

That's all you have to do. Just believe. It's like the song says: "All He asks us in return is that we just believe."

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (John 6:29)

Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost said:

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Jesus is the only chance you have.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

The only alternative to Jesus is to spend eternity toasting and roasting in the pit of hell!

Can you believe? Can you believe that you are a sinner, guilty of cosmic treason against the Creator of the universe? Can you believe that the wages of your sin is eternal death? Can you believe that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord? Can you confess Jesus as your Lord and believe that God has raised Him from the dead?

If you can believe this, then you have been saved. John describes what has happened to those who have been saved. They have been reborn. And if that is you, then you have been ...

... born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:13)

You are not *born of blood*, that is physical descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You are not born of the *will of the flesh*, because this is a spiritual birth. You are not *born of the will of man*, because this isn't something you can accomplish yourself. You are born of God! This is something God does for you.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

[Jesus] came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. (John 1:11)

Jesus has come to you. Will you receive Him? Will you open this most wonderful Christmas gift? All it takes is faith. All you have to do is believe. And if you're having trouble with that, it's okay to pray for the faith to believe in Jesus Christ. Just pray, right now, right where you are: "Lord, I want to be part of Your family. I want to believe Jesus died for me. I want to declare Him as my Lord and believe He was raised from the dead. I want to have a living, intimate relationship with you Jesus. Please, give me saving faith."

Can you believe?

Will you believe?