

Sermon for Second Sunday after Christmas

The Text: John 1:1-18

Most of us spend a lot of time getting our homes ready in the lead up to Christmas, don't we? This is especially true if we were having guests or family over. We may spend hours cleaning, decorating, cooking, and reorganizing. We want our homes to be welcoming places for those who visit us.

What kind of home welcomed the Son of God? What kind of dwelling place did he find here on earth? Well, you know the story well. There was no room for him in the inn, so his first home was among the animals. Not long after that Herod was out to get him, and so he and his parents made their home in Egypt. Upon return, his home became Nazareth, where he lived for the next thirty years.

When his public ministry began, he was a guest in all kinds of homes. He dined with the religious elite and with prominent Pharisees. But he also entered the homes of sinners and outcasts, like Zacchaeus. He visited the homes of those who were sick and those who had already died, like Jairus' daughter whom he raised to life. In the many homes where he was a guest, there were those who loved him dearly and welcomed him. But there were also those who plotted his death – indeed, he would soon make his home in the grave; he would become a guest in the tomb. But the gospel for today speaks of another home that Christ entered. In John 1:14 the evangelist tells us: *'The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us'*. *'The Word'* here refers to Christ, God's Son. And what is meant by *'flesh'*? Flesh refers to everything we are: our bodies, our souls, and our minds; but also our human weakness, sinful nature, and our mortality. That's where Christ has made his home. He has made his home in our flesh. The Son of God has become a resident in our humanity.

What kind of welcome did he receive in this home? Not a warm one! John tells us: *'though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him'*. He stands at the front door of his own home, his own children answer the door, and yet they tell him: We don't know who you are—good bye'. How hurtful!

What kind of welcome does he receive in your home, I wonder? Do you always feel at ease with Jesus at your kitchen table, or in the back seat of your car? Is he welcome in the conversations you share and the thoughts you think? Do you invite him to join in the gossip? Is your home, is your flesh, a fitting place for Christ?

Well let's face it, often it isn't. But that's just the point! Christ was born in Bethlehem for no other reason than to live your life and die your death. The Word became flesh for us, and we welcome him by faith.

Christ is always a guest in the home of sinners, for we are all sinners. He won't politely ask to leave when we become embarrassingly entangled in sin. He won't mutter excuses about needing to be elsewhere, when our good Christian front falls to pieces. He is the word made flesh, and he is here to stay. *To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God (John 1:12).* How incredible!

But as long as he stays, our homes will change. That's because when he enters a home he comes with his gifts. Not a box of toys or bowl of tossed salad, but something much better. Listen again to our verse: *'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...[He] came from the Father, full of grace and truth'*. The Christmas hamper of Christ is full of grace and full of truth.

By his grace he accepts the state of our home – but with his truth he repairs and restores it. By grace he redeems us from the sins of our flesh - with his truth he renews us to serve him. His grace puts up with our ignorance and silliness – his truth enlightens our minds with the knowledge of God. By grace he dwells with sinners, and by his truth he sets us free from sin. This is the guest who enters our homes: the One who became flesh and dwelt among us.

And this is also what Christmas is all about. For these days will soon pass and we will welcome Epiphany, then Lent, Easter and Pentecost. The baby in the manger will grow, he will suffer, he will die, he will rise and take his place in his eternal home, at the Father's right hand. And there, brothers and sisters in Christ, he prepares a home for us. Not in fallen flesh, but in the new creation.

For the one who wrote: *'the Word became flesh'* also recorded Jesus' promise: *'In my Father's house are many rooms...and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am'*.

May the Son of God, who prepares a home for us, dwell in our homes today so that we may dwell in his forever. Amen.