

Streetsville United Church  
Sunday, January 3, 2010  
Rev. John Tapscott

**"WHO IS JESUS?"**

John 1:1-4

A wife gave her husband two ties for Christmas. He, being a grateful and peace-loving soul, immediately went and put one tie on. He returned to the kitchen where his wife was preparing breakfast. Seeing he had one of the ties on, she asked, "What's the matter, don't you like the other one?"

Before Christmas and on Christmas eve we read the Christmas story from Luke's Gospel. It's not that we like Luke better than Matthew, it's just that Luke is the designated Gospel for the year. Actually Luke gives the fullest account of Jesus' birth. The Gospels of Mark and John don't include the birth story at all. They chose to use their precious parchment to highlight other aspects of Jesus' life.

Now John certainly knew all about the birth of Jesus. He says as much in chapter 1 and verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." But rather than dwelling on the birth, John jumps right in to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" The other Gospels answer this question too, but John brings another perspective to this question. John's Gospel was likely written 10 or 20 years later than the other Gospels. By then the Holy Spirit had led the Church into an ever fuller understanding of who Jesus is.

Now notice that I've asked the question, "Who is Jesus?," rather than "Who Was Jesus?" That's the question we would ask of a figure of past history "Who was he or she? "Who was Winston Churchill?" Who was John F. Kennedy?" But one thing that makes Jesus unique is that he is not just a figure of past history. He is our living contemporary. He is...*now*! Hence the question, "Who is Jesus?" And in his opening verses John says in effect, "If you want to know about the birth of Jesus, then read what was written by my friends Matthew and Luke. But I'm going to just jump right in and tell you who Jesus is. In fact, my answer is so big, so great, so wonderful, that words can hardly contain it. Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the Life of God. Jesus is the Light of God."

So let's start here today. Who is Jesus? **He is the word of God.** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through Him and without him not one thing came into

being.”

Now John was drawing upon Greek thought here. The Greeks believed in the concept of the Word or the “logos”, the rational idea or principle which stands behind the universe and holds it all together. And according to John, Jesus Christ was and is this Word. He was with God the Father at the beginning, even before creation came into being, and everything that the Father made somehow bears his image. He is the beginning of all things and the end of all things, the one who holds everything together. Jesus is the Word of God, as the Greeks believed in it. And this Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

But let’s not overlook the Jewish concept of “the Word.” In Jewish thought, the Word is moving and powerful and achieves God’s purposes. Above all, it is through words that God communicates with people and makes his will and his character known. We use words in the same way - in order to communicate our thoughts and to make ourselves known. And sometimes finding the one right word to express your thoughts in speaking or writing is a challenge.

From before time began God knew the one word he wanted to speak to the human race. He knew how he wanted to communicate his purposes, his character, his attitude, his heart and mind. And that was through the word made flesh, Jesus Christ. And since the word was always with God, he knew the heart and mind of God better than anyone, and could communicate it better. So John writes in verse 18, “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.” Jesus Christ is not just a word of God among many. He is the true word of God, which sums up everything God wants to say to us. John’s Gospel really focuses on this idea of God communicating in and through Jesus. Yes, there had to be many words spoken by the prophets in order to prepare the way for this one Word. But at the right time this word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Jesus is the Word of God, the way God communicates with us most fully and clearly.

A scientist was studying an ant colony. He meant them no harm. His desire was to help them in any way he could. But every time he leaned over the colony and his shadow covered them, the ants scurried down their holes in fear. He wondered how he could possibly show them or tell them about his good intentions. He really couldn’t imagine a way to do it other than to somehow become an ant himself and tell them in their own language. Well, the scientist couldn’t do that, but he did get a new insight into what the Bible means by the “word became flesh.” And of course, God could do what the scientist could not do. “For nothing is impossible with God.” God became one of us and communicated

with us in our own language. The word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. God's prime way of speaking to us is through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Word of God. It's a profound statement about who Jesus is.

Then John tells us that **Jesus is the Life of God.**

John says, "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people." And John's Gospel is all about the life of God in Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." Jesus, living with the Father from before time began, brought God's own life into time and space, and because Jesus lives now, he brings God's life to all who receive him and believe in his name.

Of course, physical life is a gift of God and we treasure it. We rejoice in the birth of each new child. But physical life is not enough. Without the life of God our lives are incomplete and fall short of the potential God has placed in us. Without the life of God in us we are like plants which never get watered and fertilized. Or like cut flowers, looking fine for a time, but soon withering up and dying. So Jesus came to give us the life of God, for he *is* the life of God. The life of God that Jesus brings is like CO<sub>2</sub> and sunlight and water to a plant. Jesus Christ gives us power to become children of God and fulfill our God-given potential. The life which Jesus gives is life of purpose and meaning. It is life of forgiveness and faith. It is life of love and liberty. It is life of hope and helpfulness. This life will not be broken by death, but fulfilled beyond our physical death in the Father's house.

In his first letter John writes, "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." Do you have the Son of God? Do you trust in Him? If so then you have already taken hold of life that is life indeed, life that is death defying, life that is eternal. At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though they die, yet shall they live and whoever lives and believe in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Martha said, "Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world." May God grant to all us such faith and conviction. May God grant us the power to say, as we receive this sacrament, "Yes, Lord, I believe." Jesus is the Life of God.

Finally, John tells us that **Jesus is the Light of God.** Verse 4, "in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."

The darkness of this world caused by the power of sin and evil and death is very deep indeed. Human-made lights may shine brightly for a while and attract many people, but eventually they flicker and die, dashing our hopes. But there

is a God-given light which shines no matter how dark it becomes. Oh, some people did not receive him, and the power of evil tried to extinguish him forever by nailing him to a Cross. But the Father raised him from the grave on the third day to live forevermore. Jesus Christ is forever the light of God who shines in the darkness. His light can never be extinguished. And the darker it becomes the more brightly he shines and the more powerfully he attracts us.

In Kentucky you can take a walking tour of the Mammoth caves, carved out of limestone over the eons by running water. Floodlights light your path. At the bottom of a huge cave the guide says, "This is what complete darkness is like," and turns out the lights, one by one until there is only utter darkness. You can't tell up from down or see the person beside you. Visitors report a real sense of disorientation. The guide says, "Here's how we would get back to the surface if we had a power failure." He lights a single match and because it's so dark that match brightens up the entire cave. In fact, there is enough light for visitors to follow the path back to the surface. So Jesus Christ is the light of God, who shines more brightly the darker it becomes. He is the light of God who can lead us through this life and this world to the Father's house above. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

A new Christian wrote to Billy Graham asking, "I know I'm going to heaven when I die, but what does God want me to do in the meantime?" Billy Graham replied, "What does God want you to do? Listen: As long as you are on this earth, he wants you to walk with him every day. The Bible says there are only two ways of living. The first way is to live for yourself. But the second is to live for Christ - to do what he wants you to do, following his will and his plan for your life. How does this happen? It happens as you read the Bible and allow its truth to shape your life. It happens also through prayer and through fellowship with other believers. And Graham ended his note by saying, "Never take your eyes off Christ."

Who is Jesus? He is the Word of God, the life of God, and the light of God. And as I come to a close, let me say that these answers indicate something very profound about Jesus. Oh yes, he was human for sure - "the word became flesh", but these answers, the word of God, the life of God, the light of God point to his oneness with God, his oneness with the Father. They point to his divinity, his Deity.