

“the word became flesh and lived among us.” God created us in God’s image and then God became human to live among us. That is the very definition of the incarnation; God presence with us in the body of Jesus of Nazareth. We can call it a doctrine, a biblical concept, a philosophy or just an ancient idea. How would you define the incarnation and its importance? Contemplate these ideas and write yours here.

Thursday, December 28

Read John 1:1-14 once again. Let’s continue to consider the depth of the meaning of the incarnation when God – the *logos* – became flesh in the Christ child. What an incredible God we have! With the words “the Word became flesh and lived among us,” the community to whom John was writing recognized the bond that had been established between them and God as revealed in Jesus. To become flesh is to know joy, pain, suffering and loss. It is to love, to grieve, and someday die. The incarnation binds Jesus to the “everydayness” of human experience. What does God’s entrance into human history tell you about God? What does God’s entrance into human history tell you about yourself and all humanity? Write your reflections here.

Friday, December 29

As we have journeyed through Advent this year we’ve explored Spiritual Practices, both in worship and in these devotions. How do you hear love? God’s great love for humanity was discussed in the message but let’s enter into a *Lectio Divina* of a scripture that speak to our love for others. Remember that *Lectio Divina* is a holy reading of scripture paying attention to the words that capture your attention. Once you do that you prayerfully consider what God is communicating to you. Read Luke 10:27 aloud. Read it a second time or have someone else read it or listen to a recording of it. What do you believe God is communicating to you? Write your thoughts here.

Message Notes – December 24, 2023

Fully Human, Fully Divine - *Son of God, Love’s Pure Light**

- I. As anyone who’s lived through an extended power failure knows, _____ is a resource most of us take for granted until it’s unexpectedly absent.
 - A. Imagine going without a _____ for half the year!
 - B. Such was the daily lot of the remote _____ village of Rjukan.
 - C. The citizens of Rjukan once walked in _____. Now, they see a _____ light.
- II. The third verse of *Silent Night* begins, “Silent night, holy night, Son of God, _____ pure light.”
 - A. Whitney Simpson, author of *Fully Human, Fully Divine*, writes, “God’s gift of Faithful love will be delivered to you this week in the form of a _____.
 1. She also writes, “The _____ of the year falls during Advent.”
 2. “This presents us with a time to recognize the _____, loss, and hard times of the season, even as we are _____ in the love of God.”
 - B. Simpson writes, “_____ is God’s love for the world and for us. If we ponder this invitation more deeply, we realize that the gift of love has a _____ and a name. We call it _____.”
 1. One of the greatest experiences in life to hold a _____ in your arms.
 2. Like our children, like the Christ Child born twenty centuries ago, love _____ and _____.
- III. How _____ deepens and grows within us is poetically and beautifully expressed in our Gospel Lesson for today.

*Isaiah 9:2-7 and John 1:1-14

- A. The Middle Eastern view of words is that they have tremendous _____.
 - 1. The _____ represents the creative power of God.
 - 2. The word is _____ and that _____ is the _____ of the world.
 - B. With the words “the Word became _____ and lived among us,” the community recognized the bond that had been established between them and God as revealed in Jesus.
 - 1. God is not _____ from his creation and from humanity as the crowning glory of his creation.
 - 2. To become flesh is to know _____, pain, suffering and loss. It is to _____, to grieve, and someday die.
- IV. We are to _____ more fully with the incarnation as the _____ hope, peace, joy and love.
- A. God loves _____, and sent to Jesus, the light of the world, that overcomes _____ darkness.
 - B. God really loves _____.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, December 25

Merry Christmas!! What a busy day yesterday was with the Fourth Week of Advent at morning worship and Christmas Eve that evening! While we read the Prologue of John’s Gospel (1:1-18) that tells of how the Word became flesh, it was mentioned during the message that the birth narratives involving the young family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus are located in Matthew (1:18-25) and Luke (2:1-20). Pastor Jack’s family has a tradition of reading one of the birth narratives from Mathew or Luke before opening presents on Christmas Day. It’s a great reminder of the

true meaning of Christmas and especially this year when we’ve focused on embodying hope, peace, joy and love. Have a Merry and meaningful Christmas! Be blessed!

Tuesday, December 26

Read Isaiah 9:2-7. The message began with a description of the Norwegian Village, Rjukan. The people of this village, which is west of Oslo in the mountainous interior of that wintry land, live in constant twilight. For half a year, noon is no brighter in terms of sunshine than the beginning of dawn or dusk. In fact, the people there never see the sun from September to March. During the message Pastor Jack shared that there is good employment in Rjukan but the human cost is high from depression and stressed relationships. In Michigan we talk about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) for short. The absence of sunlight can trigger a change in brain chemistry and people are prone to being irritable and depressed. Do you feel depressed or even a little “blue” during the short days of winter? Can you imagine coping with little sunlight for six months of the year? Think of Isaiah’s words about living in darkness and how that affects a community. Consider these ideas and questions and write your reflections here.

Wednesday, December 27

Read John 1:1-14. The message mentioned “the Word” a lot and the Greek word for “word” is *logos*. *Logos* is so much more than just the translation of our English “word.” It represents the creative mind of God. Remember how God, in the first chapter of Genesis in our Hebrew Scriptures created all that is by speaking. In John’s Gospel, he connects *logos* with the Christ part of the trinity. He tells us that the *logos* – this mind of God – is life and the light of the world. Then John makes the incredible claim that