



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Christmas Day – December 25, 2017: Christmas Eve

The gospel says:

And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

That's what we celebrate today, Christmas Day. The Word became flesh and lived among us.

The Word.

What's in a word? A word is a description that embodies the senses, portrays something we can taste, touch, feel, smell, or hear. And as a word embodies the senses, its works its way into our core, warming our hearts, transforming who we are and how we experience the world around us.

Pay attention to what goes on inside your body when you hear different words: Christmas, family, hope, salvation, love. We don't just hear the words with our ears and in our heads, we experience them in our bodies and feel them in our hearts. They make us tingle. They warm our souls. Words have a physiological effect on us. They can damage us and they can restore us.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

In early September, I felt compelled to call Ryan and Angela Gough, Cathedral members who regularly serve at and attend the 8:00 service, because their son, Ethan, had just been born—several weeks early.

I went into Ethan's room at Kapiolani Hospital, walked over to the incubator, hovered over Ethan, made some cooing noises, and smiled. And before I said my prayers, I had to stop and paused because I got choked up, *ver klempt* as I like to say. And I was hooked right away. The attachment was immediate and without thinking, and even though I couldn't do it, I wanted to reach out, hold him, and put him in my arms. That's the way it is with babies. And as I looked upon the newborn Ethan Gough, I felt the essence words as they soothed my body and warmed my soul, words like—peace, calm, tranquility, hope, and most of all, love.

That young and tender baby, that newborn human being; drew out of me my innate ability to love, something that's often left untapped, something that needs to come out of me, waft into the ether, and land on my human heart. It was a gift. Love. God is love. The Word.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us. Love. The word embodied in one human life, just a few days old. The newborn baby in the incubator at Kapiolani Hospital and the babe in a manger in Bethlehem. Think of the word, love, embodied in that one human being in the Holy Land two thousand years ago.

Love. The word became flesh and lived among us. And it's not just about you, me, the parents, the grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, but all of humanity. That babe in Bethlehem changed the world, for the better, in spite of all its flaws and all its faults, the world became a better place that day, just like it became a better place for me, the day I went to visit Ethan Gough in that incubator at Kapiolani.

Christmas Day – December 25, 2017, cont'd

When the Christ child was born, he changed all of humanity, for we knew in that moment, that we were all worthy, valued, loved, and saved—no matter who we are, no matter what our shortcomings. What a great gift. What an extraordinary present to find under the proverbial tree of life this Christmas morn—to know and believe that we are worthy, valued, loved, and saved—to embrace the words and believe them down to our very core.

All humanity is given this day a sense of peace and love, the essence of the word made flesh in a tiny baby body, a human life, and the candle in the middle of the Advent wreath reminds us of the living Christ in our midst. The Christ child is within all of us at all times, and in all places, in our bodies, in our thoughts, in our words, in our deeds, in our senses, and in all we have to offer the world grounded in the truth that because the word became flesh and lived among us, we are loved by God and we are saved by Christ.

And we are called by God, compelled by God to take that sense of peace and love back into the world, and one day, maybe, when we try hard enough and strive hard enough, and believe hard enough, we'll be ready for the salvation of the second coming and complete the words of our Eucharistic Prayer: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Christ *will* come again.

And today we're reminded that we're at the dawn of that messianic salvation when Christ *will* come again, the glimmer of which is found in the flame of the candle in the middle of the Advent wreath. We are worthy. We are valued. We are loved. We are saved. And we don't keep that all to ourselves, but we give it back to the Christ child that we see and feel in our fellow human beings. Love.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us. It's our job, it's our duty, to show that to the world; not with pontificating and proselytizing, but with our deeds, our good works, in the way we treat others, in the way we take care of ourselves.

And then, indeed the world is transformed, and like Ethan in Honolulu, on the island of Oahu, every human child will give and receive the love of God made manifest in the babe, the Word, the light, the Christ child, and the world will, in spite of all its faults and flaws, the world will continue to be a better place and we will continue to be a people of promise, hope, and love.

The Word became flesh and lived among us. And for that simple fact we can boldly proclaim, "Merry Christmas and thanks be to God!"

Amen.