



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A – Christmas Day, 2019

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, it 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.

Several years ago I was in New York City. And while I was traipsing around Manhattan, I called on my cousin Lara in Tribeca and met her five-week old baby, Alana, my newest relative, for the very first time.

I went over to the baby, hovered over her, made some cooing noises, and smiled. I was hooked right away. The attachment was immediate and without thinking, I wanted to reach out, hold her, and put her in my arms. That's the way it is with babies. And as I cradled five-week old Alana's head in the crook of my elbow, 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.

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 held Alana in my arms.

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.

Christmas Day –December 25, 2019, cont'd.

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 Alana in Tribeca in New York City, 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.