**January 5, 2020**

**John 1:1-18**

This is John’s nativity story. This is his beginning. God was his beginning. The Word was God. And the Word was *with* God. The *logos*. (The Word with a capital “W.” **The. Word**.) According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, a word is a speech sound that communicates and that itself is not divisible into smaller units. A word is indivisible. It is the beginning building block of communication. Multiple words form a phrase to communicate a more complex idea. Lots of words form sentences and paragraphs, blooming into a jungle of ideas. Such is God. Indivisible. The beginning building block of life; God is the word, the seed, the DNA strand from which every other thing forms and blooms.

Indeed, all things came into being through this holy Word. Life came into being through the Word. “… yet the world did not know him.” People often wonder if Jesus existed before his birth in the stable. They ask, “if we believe in a Trinitarian God, where was Jesus at creation?” When we read Genesis, where was Jesus in those first chapters? According to *John*, Jesus was there. The Word. According to *Genesis*, in the beginning God spoke, and light came into being. God spoke and named the light and the darkness. God spoke and separated the waters from the waters. God named the sky. God spoke and gathered the waters together. God named the Earth and the Seas. God spoke and called forth vegetation on the Earth. God spoke and created the sun and the moon and the stars. God spoke and created swimming and flying creatures in the seas and the air. God spoke and created creeping and crawling and walking creatures on the earth. Then God spoke and created people. If it were *not* for God’s spoken holy Word, according to the first chapter of Genesis, there would be nothing. Only God. Life poured forth from God’s Word.

Then, according to *John*, the Word became flesh. God’s holiness moved from Word to womb. From a speech *sound* to a living, breathing being that used words to communicate and interact with the world around him. “Glory” was incarnate in Jesus. “Holy” was personified in Jesus. And when Christ spoke, his word became en-fleshed in others. Those who were hungry were fed. People who were sick were healed. Those who were outcast were welcomed.

Frederick Buechner whimsically wrote,

God never seems to weary of trying to get himself across. Word after word he tries in search of the right word… He tried saying it in Noah, but Noah was a drinking man… tried saying it in Abraham, but Abraham was a little too Mesopotamian with all those wives and whiskers… Tried Moses but was Moses himself was trying too hard; tried David but David was too pretty for his own good. … So he tried once more… Jesus as *le mot juste* [exactly the right word] of God. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Jesus was *exactly* the right word. Christ’s living Word brought salvation. God’s *logos* was world-changing. Our own words are not *without* their own power; they become enlivened as soon as they take shape in our mind. The word, “sex” prompts cheeks to blush and hands to warm. The words “red light” and “green light” signal our feet to start and stop cars. Merely thinking, “Yes, I can!” leads bodies to move and days to change. Then when words are uttered aloud to or by others, they take on greater power. Hearing your spouse pronounce their wedding vows to you is a life-changing and binding moment. These are the words around which people promise to shape their lives for the rest of forever. “Love and honor. To be faithful in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness.” Receiving marital partners and bystanders in the congregation weep upon the hearing of these words. Because they have power. Because they carry great weight.

But on the other hand, our negative internal dialogue wears us down and prevents us from living our best life. We think “can’t. won’t. bad.” and suddenly we believe it. Gloomy and hateful words have the power to keep people in bed for days, and send people hiding for safety.

The challenge is to keep the *right* words in our brains. Instead of allowing harmful, negative words to pollute our minds and hearts (and bodies and world), the challenge is for us to keep the best words in mind so that our hearts (and bodies and world) can then live and move in the right direction. The challenge is for us to keep the *logos* – Christ, the living Word – in mind so that we can then en-flesh the Word – in all that that entails. With Christ as our *logos*, we will naturally position ourselves to be more spiritual, more loving, more generous.

There is a trend in recent years at the beginning of a new year to claim one word as your personal theme for the year. I have found some value in the exercise, trying to concentrate my energy and reflections on the pursuit of “honesty,” “openness,” and other such things. But I wonder if they should all be discarded to use instead (and simply) “*logos*.” The Holy Word. The Living Word. As Buechner wrote, Jesus was and is *exactly* the right word. Let him be the word that shapes our new year. Let God’s living Word be our beginning and our enlivening. Let all of our life – our words and thoughts, our feelings and doings, our habits and our adventures – come into being through Christ’s *logos*.

As we will soon sing, “Joy to the World! the Savior reigns; let us our songs employ.” So may we tell and shout, share and sing the wonders of his love, today and every day. Amen.

1. Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking*, pp. 121-122. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)