

**"And the Word Became Skin and Tissue and Muscle and Bone..."**

**John 1:14**

**27 November 2022**

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, and we begin a new series titled "3-D Jesus." During the season of Advent, we turn our attention to the first coming of Jesus, while anticipating His final coming. Advent means "coming" or "arrival." So, during the Christmas season, we look back at the first coming of Jesus- *at His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension*- while anticipating and expecting His final coming. At His final Advent, He will make all things new. He will make all sad things come untrue.

But, how does Jesus- *the eternal, invisible, immortal, immutable, impassible God*- how does He become a human being? How is that even possible? How does He enter this messy, broken, damaged world without becoming sinful like it? How does He not catch the virus of sin from us? How does He become a human being and not be sinful? Because all we know *experientially* is that human beings are sinful.

So, how does Jesus become a human being and not sin? And, how does the eternal God take on limited human flesh? How does the God who has no beginning have an actual beginning in time as a baby? That's what we'll be looking at in our Advent series: how Jesus became the God-man, in three-dimension, in technicolor.

And, we'll see just how important it is. There are big time implications about who Jesus is *now* and how He ministers to us *now*- in real time. And, all of that depends on whether He was truly human. It matters right now- on the first Sunday of Advent in 2022- it matters that Jesus was a human being. Everything that Jesus did and experienced as a man has major implications about how He ministers to us right now, in real time, on November 22.

And that leads us to our big idea today-

**IF JESUS IS NOT THE SAME AS YOU, THEN JESUS CANNOT SAVE YOU.**

If Jesus did not become a human being, then we could never be saved. If Jesus did not take on every aspect of humanity- *sin being the only exception*- then God could not redeem this world. Because that's exactly how God redeems this broken world: He redeems this world by becoming just like us, sin being the only exception. Jesus came as the Second Adam, to do what Adam did not do. To live a perfect life and fulfill the law on our behalf. And, to die in our place for our sins.

So, all that He did for us and our salvation He did as a man, with facial hair and toenails and kneecaps and elbows and intestines and armpits. You may have never thought about this before, but it matters that Jesus had armpits. It matters that He had elbows. It matters that He had a pinky finger on each hand. So, you being saved and forgiven of your sins, is very much dependent on whether or not Jesus had elbows. You think about that today.

And, while you're thinking about the importance of Jesus' elbows, turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John, chapter one. We'll use the verse we're looking at today as a launching pad to look at the incarnation of Jesus. So, John 1. We'll read verses 1-2 and then jump down to verse 14.

LOOK AT VERSE 1...

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

LOOK AT VERSE 14...

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

What's interesting is that John's Gospel tends to get shelved at Christmas. Not many people come here for Christmas verses or devotionals or sermons. Matthew gives us wise men and a foolish king in the opening of his Christmas story. And, Luke gives us singing angels and dirty shepherds. But John just goes back to the beginning and speaks of God, and His Word who is at His side. John's Gospel seems a long way from Bethlehem and a long way from "Joy To The World," yet nothing could be further from the truth. Perhaps the prologue of John's Gospel is the incarnation passage *par excellence*!

At the beginning of his Gospel, John speaks of God in eternity past. But, what was God doing before anything else existed? What was He doing in eternity past, before He even created angels? Answer: He was loving and glorifying. He was sharing and praising. The Trinity was celebrating in the perfection of divine fellowship! The Father, Son, and Spirit were caught up in this inner-Trinitarian joyful dance. And we catch a glimpse of that reality right at the beginning of John's gospel.

So, Christmas, according to the apostle John, reminds us that God is a communicating, life-giving, shining-out kind of God. He is no self-absorbed black hole, sucking glory from all that exists; if anything, the arrows need to go in

the other direction – God communicates to us in His Son, and He gives life to us, and He shows light to us, and He extends grace to us. And, this is the quintessential message of Christmas. And, it's a message that has its roots in eternity past.

And, Christmas has its roots in eternity past because that's when God decided to send Jesus, the eternal Word, into the world to save sinners like you and me. But, then John goes on to tell us in verse 14 that the eternal Word - *Jesus*- actually became flesh and lived life among us. But, what was that like? We all have ideas of what this was like, ideas about what Jesus was like. We all have pictures in our mind of what He was like as the God-man. But, what was it really like?

Well, during Advent, I want us to look at a few pictures of Jesus that we see in the photo album of the Bible. Over the next few weeks, I hope to show you pictures of Jesus that might cause your jaw to drop open. And humble you and make you love Him even more.

So, Christmas reminds us that Jesus was just like us, the only exception is that He was without sin. Jesus was a human being just like you and me. He had hair. He had nose hair. He had armpits that would stink. He had a spleen. He had toenails. He would sleep and wake up with crust in His eyes and drool on His beard. And He would wake up and His breath would stink just like yours does when you wake up!

Don't think that because Jesus was God that He was exempt from having bad breath in the morning. Don't think that because Jesus was God then He must have woken up with breath that smelled like peppermints. When Jesus woke up in the morning, He had bad breath. Why? Because He was a human being just like you and me, sin only excepted.

And when John 1:14 says that Jesus is the Word made flesh, he is saying that in the Incarnation, God's eternal nature was united with a very limited human nature.

So, when we think about and talk about the Incarnation of the Son of God, when we say that the Word became flesh, we are saying that the eternal, immutable, unchanging, impassible Son of God became a human being. We are saying that Jesus, who had no beginning and will have no end, also had a beginning in time and space in His humanity. In His divinity, as God, Jesus had no beginning. As God, Jesus has always existed. As God, Jesus had no beginning. But in His humanity, He was born into this world, in space and time, on a specific day on the calendar, and at an exact time on the clock.

But, how did it happen? How was God's eternal nature united to a very limited human nature? The Bible tells us that Jesus was brought into being in this physical world through the power of the Holy Spirit as His eternal divine nature was miraculously joined together with a created human nature inside the womb of His virgin mother, whose name was Mary. Luke tells us in his Gospel:

Luke 1:34-35

*And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."*

So, at a specific point in time, the God-man, or should we say, the *God-baby*, was united in Mary's womb.

Think about that. At a specific nano-second in time, the Holy Spirit moved within Mary's womb, and the eternal, timeless, limitless, immutable, unchanging, impassible Son of God was united to human flesh, albeit a tiny little mass of human flesh. Amazing!

Now, how in the world was this possible? How could the eternal Son of God who had no beginning have a beginning as a human? How could these 2 natures, God and man, God and baby, coexist in one Person, inside a pregnant teenager? Because that is what we are saying. We are saying that all that is in God joined together with all that is man-*all that is baby*- inside Mary.

That means that everything we saw about God earlier this year in our series on the undomesticated attributes of God was there in Mary's tummy. All that is in God- His *incomprehensibility, infinitude, aseity, simplicity, immutability, impassibility, eternality, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, omnisapience (all-wise)*- all of that that is in God, was joined together with a little embryonic blastocyst inside a teenage girl's belly. The God-baby. How? How? How?

Paul Smalley said it perfectly when he described what it was like for us consider deep theological concepts like this and to have conversations about God:

*"We're like children who are having a discussion about nuclear physics."*

When we are discussing the incarnation of Jesus, we are like little kids having discussions about things that are so far beyond us! We're a bunch of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders talking about nuclear physics!

Understand this: Christmas is the good news that Jesus is a human being just like you in every way, *sin being the only exception*. And, it's really good news, by the way! As the book of Hebrews tells us-

*Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.* Hebrews 2:17-18

It's good news that Jesus was made like us in every way so that He could 1) be a merciful high priest and 2) so that He could make propitiation for our sins.

He could not do this apart from having ear lobes. Jesus had to have ear lobes in order to be a merciful high priest and make atonement for our sins. He had to be fully human. And, He had to be tempted in every way that we are:

*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Hebrews 4:14-16

We'll return to talk about these things over the next month. But, the author of Hebrews is giving us a Christmas sermon and telling us that Jesus had to be just like us in every way, except that He was without sin. If we are to be saved, then Jesus had to be like us. If we want a merciful high priest to stand for us in the presence of a holy God, then Jesus must be a human being who fully obeyed the law of God for us. If we want forgiveness of sins, then Jesus must be a human being, made up of body and spirit, who as a human being took the curse of the law upon Himself for us on the cross. If we want access to God, then we need Jesus, the God-man.

So, Jesus was made just like us- except that He was *not* born with a sin nature like us. And, He never sinned. Jesus never sinned. Otherwise, Jesus was just like us! He had hair. He had nose hair. He had armpit hair. His armpits would stink. He burped. He laughed. He needed naps. He threw up. He stubbed His toes. He cried. He suffered. When He woke up in the morning, His breath would stink. When He woke up in the morning, He needed coffee. He was just like us! Everything that we experience as human beings, He experienced.

That means Jesus probably stepped on a *Lego* piece with bare feet at some point in His life. All of you parents have done that, right? Nothing worse than stepping on a *Lego* piece. Jesus probably stepped on a *Lego* piece. Everything that we experience as human beings, He experienced. He was just like us, but the difference was that He was without sin.

Advent, then, is our annual reminder that Jesus was made up of skin and tissue and muscle and bone and kneecaps and shins and big toes and earlobes and teeth and a tongue. It's a reminder that He had to use the restroom and He got hungry and He wasn't exempt from stubbing His toe or sleeping crooked and waking up with a crick in His neck. He was fully human, just like you and me.

Max Lucado says, "*Jesus may have had pimples. He may have been tone-deaf. Perhaps a girl down the street had a crush on him or vice versa. It could be that his knees were bony. One thing's for sure: He was, while completely divine, completely human.*"

*For thirty-three years he would feel everything you and I have ever felt. He felt weak. He grew weary. He was afraid of failure. He got colds, burped, and had body odor. His feelings got hurt. His feet got tired. And his head ached.*

*To think of Jesus in such a light is—well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It is much easier to keep the humanity out of the incarnation. Clean the manure from around the manger. Wipe the sweat out of his eyes. Pretend he never snored or blew his nose or hit his thumb with a hammer.*

*He's easier to stomach that way. There is something about keeping him divine that keeps him distant, packaged, predictable.*

*But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't. Let him be as human as he intended to be. Let him into the mire and muck of our world. For only if we let him in can he pull us out."* (<https://maxlucado.com/it-began-in-a-manger-christmas/>)

Listen, it may feel irreverent to think of Jesus this way, but this is exactly what John means when he says that the "Word became flesh." Jesus was just like us. As Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the Cappadocian Fathers, said this in his *Epistle 101*-

*"For that which he has not taken up he has not saved."*

What does he mean when he says, *"For that which Jesus has not taken up he has not saved?"* Gregory of Nazianzus means that if Jesus did not become like us in every way- *except for sin*- then He could not save us.

Gregory of Nazianzus would tell you-

**IF JESUS IS NOT THE SAME AS YOU, THEN JESUS CANNOT SAVE YOU.**

If Jesus did not come as a human being and get a runny nose or a toothache or burp or eat certain foods that would upset His stomach, then we can't be saved! If Jesus did not come as human being with fingers and toenails and ears and a bellybutton and kneecaps and liver and lungs and ankles and armpits...then He cannot save you from the coming wrath of God!

But, because He did, Christian, you have a merciful high priest who sits at the right hand of God the Father. He has paid for your sins. He was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin. You can run to Him and He will help you fight sin. You can confidently draw near to the throne of grace now and find mercy and grace. And the whole reason that you can do that is because Jesus was just like you, sin being the only exception.

So, if Jesus is not fully human, then you have no hope.

And, if Jesus does not have a femur bone, then you can't be forgiven.

And, if Jesus does not have a rotator cuff, then you can't be redeemed.

And, if Jesus does not have saliva, then you can't be saved.

And, if Jesus does not have an abdomen, then you can't be adopted.

And, if Jesus does not have ribs, then you can't be resurrected.

But, Jesus did have all those things. And He was and is just like us. And that means that He experienced every kind of emotion that we have. He was sad. He was lonely at times. He wasn't always chipper. His heart got broken, just like yours. He was let down by people. He experienced sadness and sorrow. He cried. He hurt. And that's why He's a faithful and merciful high priest. He's been where you are and experienced what you are going through.

And, because He was human, that means that He feels like you. He has suffered like you. He knows what it is to have a broken heart! He knows what it feels like to have His heart ripped out of His chest because He was and is a human being.

Let me ask you: Are you suffering today? Overwhelmed with life? Do you have a broken heart today? Have you been betrayed by someone you love? Have you been abandoned? The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus has been there too- because He's human.

Sometimes He wanted to cry. And He did cry- because He was human. And He experienced heartache. And betrayal. And abandonment. And rejection. And His best friends walked away from Him when He needed them the most. And one of His best friends denied ever even knowing Him. He had a real human soul, a real human spirit, a real human mind, a real human heart that got walked on.

So, Jesus knows what it is like to be a human being and going through a very dark night of the soul. Jesus is acquainted with darkness. And because He has been to the dark places, He can offer you light in your darkness. The reason I want to remind you of the humanity of Jesus, is because you will need it when you are in the dark place- when your soul is vexed, when your heart is broken, when you feel like giving up on life, maybe even talking your life. So, don't doubt in the dark what God has taught you in the light.

Sure, you may say, *"I know. I know. Jesus was a human. Yeah, yeah, yeah."* But, that is exactly what you need for Christmas. It's what you need to know when you are suffering. You need to know that Jesus is human. You need to be reminded that you have a faithful and merciful high priest who knows exactly how you're feeling because He has been there. He has been to the dark places. And He will help you.

So please understand that Jesus is not unaware of your pain. What you are going through right now, Jesus is fully aware. Jesus has entered your pain, your sorrow. And that makes Him a faithful and merciful high priest.

Dane Ortlund says-

*"In our pain, Jesus is pained; in our suffering, he feels the suffering as his own even though it isn't - not that his invincible divinity is threatened, but in the sense that his heart is feelingly drawn into our distress. His human*

*nature engages our troubles comprehensively. His is a love that cannot be held back when he sees his people in pain...*

*Contrary to what we expect to be the case, therefore, the deeper into weakness and suffering and testing we go, the deeper Christ's solidarity with us. As we go down into pain and anguish, we are descending ever deeper into Christ's very heart, not away from it. Look to Christ. He deals gently with you. It's the only way he knows how to be."* (Gentle and Lowly, p. 46, 57)

We have a gentle Savior because He was human. Because He had elbows.

So, remember-

**IF JESUS IS NOT THE SAME AS YOU, THEN JESUS CANNOT SAVE YOU.**

But, the good news of Christmas is that He is the same as you and He can save you. Will you trust in Him? Will you believe that He- *though He was without sin*- became sin on the cross so that you might be saved? Will you take that step today and place your faith in Him, the three-dimensional, gentle Savior of sinners?

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"And the Word Became Skin and Tissue and Muscle and Bone..."

John 1:14

Sermon Study Questions

1. READ John 1:14. How do you typically think of Jesus in His humanity? Discuss what Max Lucado said:

*"Jesus may have had pimples. He may have been tone-deaf. Perhaps a girl down the street had a crush on him or vice versa. It could be that his knees were bony. One thing's for sure: He was, while completely divine, completely human. For thirty-three years he would feel everything you and I have ever felt. He felt weak. He grew weary. He was afraid of failure. He got colds, burped, and had body odor. His feelings got hurt. His feet got tired. And his head ached. To think of Jesus in such a light is—well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It is much easier to keep the humanity out of the incarnation. Clean the manure from around the manger. Wipe the sweat out of his eyes. Pretend he never snored or blew his nose or hit his thumb with a hammer. He's easier to stomach that way. There is something about keeping him divine that keeps him distant, packaged, predictable. But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't. Let him be as human as he intended to be. Let him into the mire and muck of our world. For only if we let him in can he pull us out."*

Do you feel that it is irreverent to think this way about Jesus? Why is it important to stress His humanity? Have you ever considered that a young girl might have had a crush on Jesus? Why or why not?

2. READ Hebrews 2:17-18 and Hebrews 4:14-16 and discuss why it is important that Jesus was 100% human.

3. Discuss what Paul Smalley said: *"We're like children who are having a discussion about nuclear physics."*

4. Discuss this thought from the sermon:

*When we think about and talk about the Incarnation of the Son of God, when we say that the Word became flesh, we are saying that the eternal, immutable, unchanging, impassible Son of God became a human being. We are saying that Jesus, who had no beginning and will have no end, also had a beginning in time and space in His humanity. In His divinity, as God, Jesus had no beginning. As God, Jesus has always existed. As God, Jesus had no beginning. But in His humanity, He was born into this world, in space and time, on a specific day on the calendar, and at an exact time on the clock.*

5. Discuss what Dane Ortlund said:

*"In our pain, Jesus is pained; in our suffering, he feels the suffering as his own even though it isn't – not that his invincible divinity is threatened, but in the sense that his heart is feelingly drawn into our distress. His human nature engages our troubles comprehensively. His is a love that cannot be held back when he sees his people in pain... Contrary to what we expect to be the case, therefore, the deeper into weakness and suffering and testing we go, the deeper Christ's solidarity with us. As we go down into pain and anguish, we are descending ever deeper into Christ's very heart, not away from it. Look to Christ. He deals gently with you. It's the only way he knows how to be."*

