

Sermon Scriptures and Notes

Sermon Title: "Our God and King Who is Among Us"

December 31, 2017

Robbie Pruitt

Sermon Scriptures: Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7, and John 1:1-18

Galatians 3:23-25 and Galatians 4:4-7: English Standard Version (ESV)

Galatians 3:23-25: 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

Galatians 4:4-7: 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

John 1:1-18: English Standard Version (ESV): The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

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. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Opening Prayer: Would you pray with me this morning.

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be acceptable to you, oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer.” Amen!

Introduction: Good morning and welcome to Christ the King and Happy New Year’s Eve! And a Happy New Year to you all! We hope that you and your family and friends have had a wonderful Christmas break so far. And Merry Christmas from all of us here at Christ the King! We are glad that you are worshipping here with us this morning! And a very special welcome to family and friends visiting from out of town, and to those who are worshipping with us for the first time!

If we have not met, my name is Robbie Pruitt, and I am one of the pastoral associates here at Christ the King. Our pastor David Glade is away today and sends his warm greetings to you all.

We are thankful and blessed to have the Rev. Rob Krech officiating today at our service. Thank you for being with us today Rob, and thank you for your service!

This morning, on this feast day of The First Sunday After Christmas, we are looking at the incarnation of Jesus. Today’s **Sermon Title** is: “Our God and King Who is Among Us.” Our **Scripture text** is: **Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7, and John 1:1-18**. You can find **Sermon Notes in your leaflet on page 11**.

What I want to explore with you this morning is the idea that “We can take courage and comfort in our God and King who is among us, and we can live differently, because Jesus, our God and King, is among us and is with us.”

Just before the Christmas break, our youngest daughter, Hannah, was sick with the stomach flu. We felt so sorry for her and stayed up with her as she struggled through the night, as one does with this kind of virus. We sympathized with her in her sickness and our hearts broke and went out to her as we cared for her.

And then, In the spirit of Christmas, our youngest gave all of us the gift of her stomach bug. And while we were all very grateful for this gift, we were not quite in the spirit of giving or sharing it. We found ourselves at home enjoying “these festivities” with the kids, as full participants. We went from being with Hannah, to

being among her in her experience, gaining a whole new understanding and appreciation of what she was going through and identifying in a whole new way with each other and our plight.

Lying in bed on that morning, this incident got me thinking of the incarnation of our God and King who is among us. Now, God understands our human condition fully, and yet, for our benefit, Jesus came and dwelt among us. He took on the human condition, yet without sin, and lived our humanity. Jesus lived a sinless life and died a sinner's death to save us from our sin, and from our sufferings, these sufferings which He too experienced on our behalf, yet He did not deserve them.

C. S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, communicated Jesus's mission this way, "The Son of God became man to enable men to become the sons of God." (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*). Jesus Christ, our God and King who is among us, came to us in the flesh with this very mission in mind.

Author and leadership expert Stephen R. Covey, in his popular book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," in Habit 2, says we are to, "begin with the end in mind." Jesus began His life with the end in mind. He came among us and is among us! And He came to be known, to make the Father known, to suffer with us, to die for us, and to make us His children! To make us children of God!

This mission of Jesus is what we proclaim of Jesus in the Nicene Creed, "We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father." (Book of Common Prayer, p.358).

Our God and King came and dwelt among us! Our God is with us. He always was with us, He is with us now, and He always will be with us!

As John 1:10-13 says, "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not

receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

C.S. Lewis, from *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, said the following:

“God could, had He pleased, have been incarnate in a man of iron nerves, the Stoic sort who lets no sigh escape him. Of His great humility He chose to be incarnate in a man of delicate sensibilities who wept at the grave of Lazarus and sweated blood in Gethsemane. Otherwise we should have missed the great lesson that it is by his will alone that a man is good or bad, and that feelings are not, in themselves, of any importance. We should also have missed the all-important help of knowing that He has faced all that the weakest of us face, has shared not only the strength of our nature but every weakness of it except sin. If He had been incarnate in a man of immense natural courage, that would have been for many of us almost the same as His not being incarnate at all.” (C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*).

Jesus dwelt among us and is with us. As the disciple John says, “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.” (John 1:14, ESV).

Can you identify with the incarnation of Jesus, recognizing that God is among you? When was the first time you encountered Jesus? In whom did you first see Jesus? In other words, who embodied Jesus to you?

For me, I first encountered Jesus in my grandfather. My grandfather is a Baptist minister and preached the gospel of Jesus for over 65 years. I grew up attending his church. However, I did not know what he was preaching about until after I received Christ and had entered High School. And it wasn't his preaching that led me to Jesus. My Grandfather showed me who Jesus is through his life and character. I saw Jesus in my grandfather long before I understood his words of Jesus. My grandfather embodied Jesus to me.

And what about us, how does beholding Jesus, seeing our God and King who is among us, enable us to embody Jesus to others, and to reflect Jesus and His grace and truth to those we encounter?

One evening a few months ago, I was biking on the 4 Mile Run Trail from D.C. and encountered a gentleman who appeared to be stripping a bike by the trail, or he was repairing the bike. We'll call him "Zeke," because when I asked his name, he told me it was "Zeke." I stopped and asked Zeke if he needed any tools, he said, "No." I asked if I could pray for him and he dropped to his knees and said, "Yes! Pray for me. I have been talking 'trash'. Pray for my sin of slander." I prayed for Zeke and blessed him. He then said he could use some AAA batteries, so I obliged. I hope and pray that Zeke met Jesus on the trail that night. (The Pizza Man at YG).

See, we live in a world that is hardened and darkened. John 1:10-11 says, "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." (John 1:10-11, ESV). Some people are not ready to receive Him, and yet, some people are.

At some point in our lives, many of us were in this crowd, of those who did not know Jesus and who did not receive Him. Some of us can identify with not knowing Jesus and not receiving Him at this very moment in your lives. Maybe you are still looking into Christianity, and that is okay. God is waiting and He is revealing Himself in His son Jesus—in the incarnation. He is among you.

So how are we being called to respond to our God and King who is among us? Do we need to come to know Him? Do we need to receive Him? Do we need His light to shine in the darkest places of our lives?

And, for those of us who do follow Jesus, how can we make our God and King who is among us visible and known to a world who does not see Him or know Him?

How should the incarnation of Jesus Christ change us, change how we live, and change how we are to live among our own neighbors?

As most of you know, I was just ordained less than two weeks ago. Having just been ordained to the diaconate, and just starting to wear a collar in public, I have become more aware and sensitive to the reality that I am bearing Christ to the world, for better or for worse, in that sometimes I get it right, and sometimes I do not, and in that sometimes this representation of Jesus is received differently by different people.

Right after the ordination service a few weeks ago, we were cleaning up after the reception and had a lot of extra food. I went to the theatre across the street, and walked into a fully attended rehearsal. Everyone turned and looked at me and got quiet, it was strange. I usually do not have this reaction from people when I walk in a room. Then, I remembered I had on my collar and was dressed in all black. It was the first time being out in public with it, and it changed people's perception.

My wife Irene and I invited everyone in the room to the kitchen for an after party and we all feasted on leftovers and we got to know one another and it was a wonderful celebration! A celebration that I hope made Jesus look good, to this initially skeptical crowd. I do not know what these folks thought that I was interrupting them for, but I do hope that the feast was as nourishing to their hearts as it was to mine, as we made these new friends. I hope that Jesus was embodied to them, as he was to me, as these wonderful people helped me continue the celebration!

It makes me think of how Eugene Petersen phrases John 1:14, in The Message translation, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish." (John 1:14, MSG). Our presence as Christians, as little Christs, should mean that Jesus is present in our households, with our families, in our neighborhoods, and in our work places. Where ever we go, Jesus is with us, and should be reflected in us.

It's like the story of the young boy who lost his bike chain while peddling by an old church building one afternoon. When he saw the priest in his clergy outfit, he exclaimed, "Hey, mister! Do you think you could pause your 'preaching' long enough to get your hands dirty and give me a hand with fixing this chain!" Our world is looking to us as followers of Jesus, wondering if we can pause our busy lives, and religious devotion, to lend a helping hand, to show them how Jesus might get His hands dirty for their sake.

So, how should Jesus, our God and King who is among us, change how we are among other people? Will others see Jesus in our neighborhoods because we are there? Will they experience the truth, graciousness, and generosity of Jesus?

The gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, according to John 1:16-18, is that “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” And “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, [and Jesus] has made him known.” [to us]. (John 1:16-18, ESV). And because Jesus has made God known to us, we can make Jesus known to others.

The incarnation is good news for us, and we should also embody this good news to others. This good news, revealed to us, and reflected in us and through us, should cause Jesus to “move into the neighborhood!”

May we fully experience our God and King who is among us. May we experience His grace upon grace. May we embody Jesus to our family and friends, and to our neighbors and to our neighborhood. May our God and King who is among us be made known in our lives and in the lives of others through all we say and do.

Closing Benediction: Because Brothers and Sisters, we were once far from our God, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those [of us] who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons [and daughters of God]. And because [we] are sons [and daughters], God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So [we] are no longer slaves, but [sons and daughters], and if [sons and daughters], then heirs through God. (Galatians 4:4-7). So then, let us be heirs of God, and let us incarnate, let us embody, Jesus in this dark World, which is so desperately in need of His light. Amen!

Closing Prayer: A Prayer for the First Sunday after Christmas Day: “Lord, Jesus, “Because you gave Jesus Christ, your only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect Man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother; so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become your children.” (Preface for the Incarnation). We praise you, Lord, Jesus!

“Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.” (Book of Common Prayer, p. 215).

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"The Son of God became man to enable men to become the sons of God."

— C. S. Lewis, from Mere Christianity

"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." (John 1:14, ESV).

- When was the first time you encountered Jesus? In whom did you first see Jesus? In other words, who embodied Jesus to you?
- How does beholding Jesus, seeing our God and King who is among us, enable us to embody Jesus to others, and to reflect Jesus and His grace and truth to others?

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:10-13, ESV).

- How can we make our God and King who is among us visible and known to a world who does not see Him or know Him?
- How should the incarnation of Jesus Christ change us and change how we are to live among our own neighbors? How should Jesus, our God and King who is among us, change how we are among other people?

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish." (John 1:14, The Message).

"For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (John 1:16-18, ESV).

- As Jesus has made God known to us, may we also make Jesus known in the world.

Prayer of the Incarnation: "O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen." (Book of Common Prayer, p. 251).