

CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25, 2011
John 1:1-4 (Primary)

EXPECTING JESUS: GOD IN OUR FLESH
Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-14)

The Word Became Flesh ... John 1:1-4 (see also Gen 1:1–2:4a)

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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was *life*, and the life was the *light* of all people.

God Has Spoken by His Son ... Hebrews 1:1-14 (Secondary)

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³ He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Some really brief thoughts...

Once again, familiarity with this passage may breed not so much contempt, but even boredom. There is always a sense that because we've heard this story before we tend to either tune it out or believe we've either heard of said all there is to hear or say about it.

But if any passage can shake us out of our Christmas stupor this one can. N.T. Wright relays a story of being invited to a friend's house. Following the directions given him by his friend, he seems to already have in his mind what he's looking for. So imagine his outright surprise as he comes around the last corner and the house in all of its grandeur comes into view. He is simply not ready for the immense structure and its remarkable beauty. We can almost hear him, sitting in his car, whispering under his breath: "I had no idea!"

The opening of John's Gospel, Wright writes, "is a bit like arriving at a grand, imposing house." And in our 21st century celebration, there are many who may just want to turn around and drive the other direction simply because it seems (is!) so grand. Let's drive closer.

For all of the grandeur, and perhaps complexity, there are still some fundamental phrases and words that we need to unwrap like gifts once again on this Christmas morning.

The phrase, ***“In the Beginning...”*** appears first as the curtain rises on John’s narrative. It’s intended to take us all the way back—to the beginning of the scriptures in Genesis 1:1ff.

The phrase, ***“In the Beginning...”*** is a way of understanding the Good News that from some point (linearly speaking) God desired to show up in the lives of every human being on the planet. “Beginning” points to newness: new life, new hope, new dawn, new possibilities. But even those words sort of imply that something preceded it: that which was old, death, despair, darkness, impossibilities. God’s beginning is rooted in God’s vision for the world that from the beginning there was a dream... God’s dream, in the beginning.

See? Already we want to turn and drive away.

“Word” is another ... word that we need to unwrap.

The “Word” in Genesis 1 is both the raw power of God’s creative force, calling into being that which was not yet; something out of nothing—indeed, everything out of nothing, light out of darkness, order out of chaos, etc. The Word is also the real, living, breathing, flesh-on-bones, blood-in-veins, beard-on-a-face, fire-in-the-belly presence of God Himself in Jesus Christ. That is what we unwrap at Christmas: the Good News that God is not, as the song implies “somewhere out there” but God is now here, right here among us. And to ‘prove’ that, bears the name “Immanuel” so that looking in his general direction we might know that God is with us.

Other words to unwrap:

Life... in the midst of death. There is the phrase, “Life goes on.” How does life go on? Life goes on in the midst of brokenness and death because God has given the promise in Christ that life is found in Christ, who, on Good Friday will die, but rise again.

Light... in the midst of darkness. (story of Gene Gauche returning home unexpectedly.)