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Christmas Continued
John 1:1-14

- 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.
- 5** The light ***shines in the darkness***, and the darkness did not overcome it.
- 6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was ***John***.
- 7** He came as a ***witness*** to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. **8** He himself was not the light, but he came to ***testify*** to the light.
- 9** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.
- 10** He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.
- 11** He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.
- 12** But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,
- 13** who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.
- 14** And the ***Word became flesh and lived among us***, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.
- ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
- ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,^[e] who is close to the Father's heart,^[f] who has ***made him known***.

Have you ever wanted Christmas to ***continue***?
I know that I'm usually ready for Christmas to be ***over***,
because of how hard it is this time of year.
I love its meaning and the birth of Christ,
but I get weary from all the hubbub...the shopping and spending,
the eating, the family gatherings with all the crazy relatives,
and sometimes without the ones you miss most.

But this year I was thinking---I would want Christmas to continue, if we mean **thinking about Jesus' birth, resting** in His presence, and **sharing** his love...that I could keep doing.

So, what if **Christmas was continued**?

Actually Christmas does last **12 days**, ending with **Epiphany**, on January 6th, when we remember the arrival of the three **wise men** who followed the star. Christmas is a **twelve day event** in the Christian year.

And, Advent and Christmas are the **beginning** of our church year, not the end of it like in our calendars. Everything begins with the birth of Jesus.

So what if Christmas was **continued in your heart and home**? What would that **mean for you**?

How could we continue the **life-giving spirit of Christmas**, **without all the stress** of what Christmastime has become in our culture?

I think that John 1 holds a **key** for us. John's Gospel reminds us of Creation, and how **Jesus IS God**, has always been God, and came into our world as God.

John calls Jesus **logos in Greek**, which means **Word**. Why? Well, remember **HOW God created** the world? By **speaking** it into existence.

And what was at the beginning of creation?

Darkness and light.

John tells us that **Jesus is THE light of all people.**

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

So Christmas is about God coming to us in Jesus,

And **Jesus coming as the light.**

It's no accident that we celebrate this season with **lights**—in our decorations, but more importantly, in our **worship**.

It's why we light an *Advent wreath*,
And have a *candlelight communion* service on Christmas Eve.

John talks about Jesus as *light and life* often in his gospel.
Some have even called this Gospel the *Gospel of light*,
because it *illuminates* our understanding of Jesus' identity.
It's more than just a *history* book on the life of Christ,
it is a *theological* book about *who* Jesus is and *why* he came as one of us.

In John we really see that *God took on skin*.
the Word became flesh and lived among us,
This is known as the *Incarnation*—God in the flesh.

In the Gospel of John we learn that the incarnation of Jesus
is the *only way we can truly see* and understand God.

Isn't that *amazing*?
God did not come as a *tourist*,
God did not come like an *angel* coming down for a bit to check out what
human life is like...only to return to heaven.
God did not come as a *celestial ruler or King* to take over the world.
God came in a *tiny vulnerable baby*...in *humble* circumstances.

This is *how we 'see' God*.
Through Jesus.

All throughout the Bible people *want to see God*,
but even Moses is kept from seeing God's face.
Elijah only hears a small whisper.
Other prophets only hear God's voice.
God is *so awesome, so holy*, we cannot see God face to face....
except in the incarnation, when *Jesus becomes human*.

In the play *Green Pastures*, which ran for many years on Broadway,
playwright Marc Connelly has a moving and memorable scene.
The Lord is anxiously looking out from heaven,
trying to decide what to do with the sinful situation on earth.
Gabriel enters with his horn tucked under his arm.

Sensing the Lord's dilemma, he brushes his lips across the trumpet to keep the feel of it and asks, "Lord, has the time come for me to blow the trumpet?" "No, no," said the Lord, "don't touch the trumpet, not yet."

God continues to worry with the problem.

Gabriel asks the Lord again what he plans to do.

Will he send someone to tend to the situation? Who will it be?

Gabriel makes some suggestions. "How about another David or Moses?

You could send one of the prophets: Isaiah or Jeremiah.

There are lots of great prophets up here!

What do you think, Lord?"

Without looking back at Gabriel, God said, "I am not going to send anyone.

This time ***I am going myself!!"***

from the sermon A Permanent Glimpse of God, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Lane Butts, *Day 1*, 2009.

At Christmas, God came—in the person of Jesus.

The incarnation.

The Word became flesh and blood, and lived among us.

Just the fact that ***God came to us*** is amazing,

Our God is ***not a distant old man in the sky!***

This is our reason for ***celebration and hope as Christians.***

And, it means we are ***not alone.***

We are ***never alone.***

God came into this world ***to be with us,***

To live, teach, heal, and preach.

To die on a cross to save us from sin,

and be raised from death, that we might have eternal life.

In The Message Bible, verse 14 says:

The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.

Jesus moved into our neighborhood.

The Word ***dwelt*** among us.

The Greek word for ***dwelt*** means '***tabernacled***'.

Do you know what a tabernacle is?

In the Old Testament it was the ***tent*** where people would ***worship*** God.

The tabernacle was built to ***house the presence of God.***

It was a ***sign that God was always with them*** before they had a Temple.

Our sign that God is always with us is **Jesus**.
 The one who **didn't just come and 'visit'** earth,
 Jesus came to live and die,
to save us from our sin and brokenness,
 and give us new and everlasting life.

Jesus was called **Emmanuel, which means 'God with us'**.
 So even in our darkest hour,
 our most challenging situations,
 our most harrowing temptations.
God is with us, in Jesus.

If there's something we might want to **'continue'** from Christmas,
 This could be it.
 This **promise**—of God with us.

So, if you could have Christmas continue,
What would that mean to you?

There's a beautiful poem by Howard Thurman, called:

"The Work of Christmas":
*When the song of the angels is stilled,
 when the star in the sky is gone,
 when the kings and princes are home,
 when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
 the work of Christmas begins:
 to **find** the lost,
 to **heal** the broken,
 to **feed** the hungry,
 to **release** the prisoner,
 to **rebuild** the nations,
 to **bring peace** among the people,
 to **make music** in the heart.*

What if we continued Christmas---that way?
HOW can we do that?

Each Sunday we have the opportunity to **make music** in our hearts,
in worship.

Are we **taking advantage** of that opportunity each week?

What about **finding the lost**?

Who are the **lost that you encounter** in your life?

How can you reach out to people who might feel lost?

Who are the **broken people** around you?

Who might be weighing heavy on your heart—

and how will you **reach out to them** now--with God's hope?

When will you call? Write? Visit?

What about the **hungry**?

We all know about feeding people—which we can do through the food pantry.

And there are **other types of hunger, too--**

How are we feeding those hungry in **soul and spirit**?

What about **releasing prisoners**?

We may not have the ability to release people from a physical prison,

but what about those who **are imprisoned**

with depression, loneliness, or addiction?

How do we **share the grace and love** of Jesus with them?

When I hear **rebuilding nations**, I think of our friends around the globe.

How can we **grow** in this type of outreach?

But my favorite line in the poem is **to bring peace among the people**.

That might be one of the most **powerful acts** in our culture right now—

To bring peace.

It might just be the **most influential thing** we can do in our world today.

We **can bring the peace of Christ**—

we can **speak** it to others, and we can **live** it.

Ours is a world of such **harsh divisions**.

Hatred and prejudice have become **norms** for our discourse and actions,

so imagine a world where we bring some peace!

We each have a sphere of influence,

What if we were to ***speak and live*** Christ's peace!
How can we do that?

These are just some ways to ***continue the spirit of Christmas***.
The trees and lights may come down, but our ***hope continues***.
Because the Word become flesh is ***still at work*** in our world.
The ***Word lives on***, through us, we ***shine the light*** of Christ.

Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor asks:

What is ***Your Word***—the Word of God that ***YOU bring to life***?
Think about the Words that describe Jesus---which one can you bring?
Will you bring ***grace? Patience? Peace? Generosity?***
What ***Word*** you can bring to life this year?
Feasting on the Word, year C, Vol. 1, pg. 191.

Similarly, what ***words*** do we want to bring to life at FPC Matawan this year?

If this is how we ***continue Christmas, I'm up for it***.
How about you?

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel***:
Christmas IS continued—through us.
We share the life and light of Jesus Christ!
And for that all God's people said, Amen.