

Second Sunday of Christmas
The Reverend John H. Brock

Sunday, January 3, 2010
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20;
Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:1-18

Grace to you and peace from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

You may have noticed, if you have ever spent much time in conversation with me, that I pause, often times in the middle of a sentence, before I continue speaking. While at time I do wonder if I have some form of an undiagnosed speech impediment, what I *really* think is happening is that I am trying to search for the word, for the correct words, because I very much strive to say what I mean, and mean what I say. I also believe that I am responsible for what I say, and that there are consequences to my words, as well as to my actions. So, I strive to be very careful and precise (though I am very seldom successful at either).

Words can be silly, or strange, or fantastical. For example, the longest word in the English language, that I am aware of, is disestablishmentarianism which means "an opponent of an established order, especially one who opposes state support of an established church." Another word that I am sure we all know, especially those who are a Disney aficionado, is Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. Before we start singing, some other words are:

honeyfuggle - to deceive by flattery or sweet-talk.
snollygoster - a shrewd, unprincipled person, especially a politician.
snickersnee - a large knife.
humdudgeon - an imaginary illness
pettifogging - something petty or trivial
ishkabibble - a dismissive statement.

Lest you think that I made those up, I got them off of www.worldwidewords.org website.

Words have power. We know that, don't we? I grew up in a fairly diverse neighborhood with people of various ethnic heritage: Italians, Poles, Germans, Irish. But as a kid, we learned different names for those ethnic groups. Names that I am not going to use now, because I have come to know that those other names hurt. They can bring pain. If you are of a certain ethnic group, or your skin is a certain color - well, if your skin is any color really - there are words that we can use to cut, hurt, or inflict pain.

But words have the power as well, to bring hope, or healing, or strength. If you tell someone, and mean it, that you love them, those are powerful words. To tell a child who struggles with school work that they are indeed intelligent, bright, creative, and smart, and to watch the change in that child's face, as the power of those positive words sink in, that is something that is truly an amazing transformation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things that came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

I don't care necessarily if you are a proponent of the big bang theory, or if you have a literal interpretation of the first two chapters of Genesis, or if you understand the creation story to be just that—a story. What happens first, what happens right there, at the very beginning, in the midst of chaos? In Genesis, God says, "Let there be light," and by the power of those words, there is light.

In the beginning was the word. But that's why we are here today, isn't it? Because of a word; because of perhaps a preached word, or perhaps because of a scriptural word, or because of the words of a spouse, a parent, or loved one that goaded, prodded, yelled or spurred us somehow into being here today. But that first Word, the Word that John wrote about, what was that Word? What did it bring? It brought Life.

In that Word was Life, and the Life was the Light of all people. What does that Life, that Light, that Word, do for us? *But to all who received that Word, who believed in the name of the Word, God gave power to become God's own children, born not of the blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of human beings, but born of the will of God.* Those are powerful words. The lesson from Ephesians that we heard this morning tells us *God destined us for adoption as God's own children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of the will of God.* Does that mean then that I am destined to be God's child because of who my parents are? No. Am I destined to receive God's Grace because of anything I've done? No. Am I destined to receive my inheritance from God because God knows just how much I've put on my pledge card this year, or because of how much I've supported Richard Sarker and his ministry in India this year, or because I've helped out at the winter shelter for the Harrisburg homeless? No, no, and no.

Why, then, are we the Children of God? Because, *the Word became flesh and lived among us.* Those words, "lived among us." A literal translation of *skeenosin*, the Greek word for "to spread a tent; or to Tabernacle," is to live, to dwell, to be with. **That** is what the Word does. This light comes from God, and becomes light in the very midst of us, and lives with us, and goes with us throughout our life.

We said the word as we began worship today - Emmanuel. God with us. That is what this Word is. It is God being with us wherever we are. That Word is far more powerful than any word I can ever give, no matter how precise I am trying to be. That Word, whose birth we just celebrated, that Word will never try any subterfuge on us. That Word will never say one thing and mean something else. That Word lives with us, that Word lives within us, that Word is with us in all things, in what we do, in what we say. Whether we feel that presence or not, that Word makes us not eye-witnesses but EAR-witnesses of that Word, the Word Christ incarnate, the Word made flesh, God the Redeemer. The only Christmas gift we ever need. Amen.

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