



## **“Dwelling Word”**

Christmas Day  
Tuesday, December 25, 2018  
The Reverend Elizabeth E. Frey  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

John 1: 1-14

How many thresholds do you cross every day? How many doors do you open and walk through on an average day? Did you ever think about counting how many times you do this in one day? This morning, I have already walked through 15 thresholds to get here for this service. Crossing thresholds is something we do on a regular basis and we don't give much thought when we cross this "ordinary" space between the indoors and outdoors.

And we don't only cross physical thresholds. We also cross metaphorical thresholds – some more important than others, some more difficult than others. I remember a threshold that I crossed that was both physical and metaphorical. I remember the night I arrived in Malaysia so well, even though I was sleepy – actually, exhausted - from the flights and the time difference. It was late in the night, probably almost 1am when our flight landed; we collected our luggage and were welcomed by our hospitable Malaysian hosts. I remember walking through the automatic doors at the airport into the dark Malaysian night.

At the threshold of these doors, I remember the blast of hot, humid air that hit my skin. Imagine the hottest, most humid day of the summer and amp that up several notches. I crossed a physical threshold from the inside of the airport into the outside, but in that moment, I didn't realize what lay ahead in the next year. I didn't stop and think about the threshold I was crossing as I entered the place that would change my life forever.

We have all crossed thresholds like this. We have all experienced many and varied thresholds in our lives. Sometimes they are moments we don't even pay attention to but looking back they were transitional moments in our lives. Sometimes in the moment, we realize something is happening. Something important is happening around us. We realize we are moving from one place and into another. We have all experienced threshold moments in our lives. Moments that take us into new experiences, that bring new people into our lives, that teach us something new about us or about our world. Moments that change us and our lives.

Perhaps these threshold moments are the beginning of new relationships. I remember the day I met my best friend. I walked into an enormous room full of people I didn't know, and she was the loudest one in the room. I thought she was so annoying, and now she's my person – the person who knows me best and loves me for all that I am.

Threshold moments may come with a diagnosis of an illness. I remember the moment my mother came home from a doctor's appointment to tell my brother and I that she was sick, that she had cancer.

Threshold moments welcome us into a new community. Do you remember when you joined Trinity? I remember the first time I walked through the Gathering Space doors and immediately felt welcomed and supported by this community of Jesus followers.

Threshold moments may bring grief. They happen when someone we love dies, when a relationship comes to an end.

Threshold moments bring us into new roles. Think of the story we heard last night – Christmas Eve – Mary and Joseph experienced a threshold moment in their lives with the birth of their son, Jesus. They became parents.

Today is about crossing thresholds. Today is about the most important threshold that God crossed, the threshold God crossed when God was born and became a human being. This threshold changed EVERYTHING.

Every Sunday we proclaim that God crossed a threshold into our midst when we say the Creed. The last few Sundays in Advent we have been saying the Nicene Creed, which uses powerful language: "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God... and [he] became truly human." Truly human. God became truly human. God became flesh and lived among us. The power of that statement. It gives me goosebumps. It moves me to tears. The Word became flesh – became a human being – and lived with us – dwelt with us. In the words of Eugene Peterson, "God became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood."

God, who sometimes seems so far away, who sometimes seems to be in another realm, another world was born, became a human being. God became one of us. God crossed a threshold from divinity into humanity. In crossing this threshold, God proclaimed that nothing – absolutely nothing – separates God from humanity. In Jesus, God came to live with us, to dwell with us, to remain with us, to stick with us no matter what.

John O'Donohue, the Irish poet writes that thresholds are "an invitation and a promise." Today's threshold is no exception. God crossing the threshold into humanity holds a promise and an invitation for us.

When God became human and dwelt among us, God made a promise to us. The promise of God's presence in our lives no matter what thresholds we cross – good or bad, difficult or simple. God made the promise of love for us, the promise of life eternal and the resurrection. This is the good news of Christmas, friends. The dwelling Word is God's promise to us and to all of God's creation.

And the invitation? As we see in the Word made flesh – the Dwelling Word – lives are changed when thresholds are crossed. Relationships are formed, and communities are

built when thresholds are crossed. New experiences are encountered when thresholds are crossed. God invites us to take part in crossing thresholds. What thresholds separate us from one another and from God? How can we cross thresholds - break down barriers - that divide us? Where is God calling us to cross thresholds in our everyday lives as followers of Jesus?

Today is about crossing thresholds. Today is about a promise - **the** promise. And today is also an invitation.

Amen.

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