

Introduction

I read an article titled "Ten Ways to Make Every Day Christmas." They include give something to someone who can use it, laugh often, and look into the face of a baby and marvel. That article reflects a frequently expressed sentiment. We should make every day Christmas day. But in reality, we don't have to because it is that already. Every day really is Christmas day. Why? It's because **"the incarnation continues"** and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us

John begins his gospel in verse 1 by calling Jesus **"the Word."** That means that God's supreme communication to man was in and through Him. Verses 1 and 2 reveal something else about Him. Before the universe began, Jesus the Word was with God because He was God, God the Son. Verse 3 then states that He created the universe and everything in it.

Those facts, that Jesus is God and Creator, are what make verse 14 so mind-blowing. He **"became flesh."** There's a word we use to express that, **"incarnation."** **"Incarnation"** comes from a Latin word that means **"in the flesh."** The Creator God came to earth in the flesh. He took a human body and became a man. Simply put, He became like us in the essential aspects of our humanity.

First, He became like us in our physical makeup. Consider just two facts about us. We have about 9000 taste buds, and our kidneys filter about 100,000 gallons of blood every year. As the words **"became flesh"** imply, Jesus had about 9000 taste buds and His kidneys filtered about 100,000 gallons of blood every years. His body, in its organic nature and function, was just like ours is.

Jesus became like us in a second essential aspect of our humanity – our psychological makeup. He had thoughts, memories, perceptions, beliefs, sensations, desires, emotions, and a will just as we do. We have fond childhood memories, for instance, and so did He. We believe

something about taxes, and so did He. We enjoy small children and so did He. We choose to marry or not to marry and so did He. That's our psychological life. We think, feel, and will and so did He.

But Jesus didn't only become flesh. He also "**dwelt among us,**" verse 14. He grew up in the home of a carpenter in the tiny Middle-Eastern village of Nazareth. After His earthly father died, He became "**the man of the house**" and helped His mother raise His younger brothers and sisters. He was a blue collar man, a carpenter, who had all the headaches and satisfactions that went along with that.

It's worthwhile to note something. Think of your life circumstances from your birth to the age of 30, which was when Jesus began His public ministry. If Jesus had come today instead of 2000 years ago, He could have carried out His mission in and through those life circumstances of yours. He could have grown up with your family and friends, lived in your apartment or house, held down your profession or job, had your life prospects, and so on.

All of that defines what the incarnation is. First, Jesus became flesh. He became like us on the essential aspects of our humanity. Second, He also dwelt among us. He walked in our shoes.

Life

That's what He did and verse 4 reveals the reason He did it.

Notice the word John uses here, a favorite of the New Testament. It's "**life.**" Let's define what life is. Generally, it's the power of something to act upon and interact with what is beyond it. So a seed in the ground has life, specifically the power to take in heat, moisture, and nourishment from the soil beyond it. Or an animal has a higher life, the power to perceive, to move, and to act on the world beyond it. This bear, for instance, has the power to use the tree to scratch his itch.

Humans of course have the highest life of all. We have biological life – the power to use trees to build homes for instance. We have social life – like the power to talk with, listen to, and care for other humans.

We have psychological life – the power to think, feel, and will things. Finally, we *can* have spiritual life – the power to act upon and interact with God and His kingdom.

Several weeks ago, a friend of Jesus shared an experience she had. She was observing her neighbor, whom she didn't know, walking down the sidewalk, when suddenly the still small voice of the Holy Spirit spoke to her. He informed her that the neighbor had serious problems, was contemplating suicide, and that she should call her, which she did. She explained what the Holy Spirit had told her, whereupon her neighbor admitted it was true. She then presented Jesus to her, after which her neighbor made the decision to follow Him. To make a long story short, that neighbor is a friend of both Jesus and her today, decades later.

The one who shared that experience with me, like all humans, has biological, social, and psychological life. But unlike most humans, she also has spiritual life. She had the power to hear from God, for example, and to be empowered by Him as she engaged her neighbor.

Life Corrupted

Now that we know what **"life"** is, let's address the word **"darkness"** in verse 5. It connotes several things one of which is this. A person doesn't have the power to act upon and interact with the spiritual realm. He or she, as a result, is cut off from God and His kingdom.

Being cut off from the spiritual realm is ruinous. Remember the definition of life. It's the power of something to act upon and interact with what is beyond it. That power enables it to draw from that **"beyond"** what it needs to sustain and enhance its being (what it is) and its influence (what it does). But when that power is weakened or taken away, its life is **"corrupted"** to quote philosopher John Ruskin.

We see this in plants don't we? Suppose we cut the roots from a tomato plant and put it back into the ground. We all know what will happen. Without roots, it has no power to draw what it needs from the soil beyond it. It eventually sickens and then dies as a result.

What's true of plants is true of humans as well. I'd explain it this way. The life powers of humans are hierarchal. The highest power is the spiritual, then the psychological, then the relational, and then the biological. In this hierarchy of powers, the malfunctioning of a higher power corrupts the powers below it. Psychological disorders illustrate this. The malfunctioning of our power to think, feel, and will corrupts the life powers below it, the social and biological. According to the Mayo Clinic, for instance, **"Sometimes symptoms of a mental health disorder appear as physical problems, such as stomach pain, back pain, headache, or other unexplained aches and pains."** It's true. The malfunctioning of a higher power corrupts the life powers below it.

Now, remember what I said. The highest life power is the spiritual. That means that the malfunctioning of that power corrupts all the other life powers. Dallas Willard explained it well: **"Robbed of spiritual truth and reality – of right relationship to the spiritual Kingdom of God – the social, psychological, and even the physical life of humankind is disordered."**

Please grasp the significance of that. I once saw a driver on Tiffany Blvd. give another driver the **"bad"** finger. We look at the routine evils people do, like that one, and ask **"Why?"** What we should ask is **"Why not?"** We should expect it. They don't have the power to act upon and interact with the spiritual realm, which in turn corrupts all of their other life powers. They're diminished psychologically, relationally, and biologically. That's the fundamental problem of humans.

The Incarnation Continues

So, Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us to solve it. Notice what John writes about Him in verse 4, **"in Him was life."** He was the very embodiment of life as I defined it. His spiritual power functioned perfectly and thus so did His psychological, relational, and biological powers. American psychologist Abraham Maslow talked about **"self-actualization."** Carl Rogers talked about the **"fully functioning**

person.” Well, Jesus was the only fully self-actualized or fully functioning person who ever lived. The entirety of His life was permeated through and through with perfect love, joy, and peace and all the other **“fruit of the Spirit”** that flow from them.

That was His life and according to John, it was **“the Light of men,”** verse 4. The word **“light”** in the New Testament conveys two things: knowledge and energy or power. So, John is saying that Jesus wants to impart the knowledge and the energy or power of His life to us. As he says it in verses 16-17, we have **“received His fullness, and grace upon grace . . . grace and truth were realized through Jesus.”**

It's in those words that we find the primary reason Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. It's that He might impart His life to us. I mean by that a life of the same quality as His, because indeed it is His. He is in our bodies. He actually dwells in us, transforming our biological, social, psychological, and spiritual powers into the image and likeness of His. We don't become perfectly functional as He was. But we do become increasingly functional until the day we die. We come to routinely think, feel, will, act and react as He would if He were us. In that sense, Jesus is still incarnated. He still lives on earth in and through our bodies. Or to say it another way, *the incarnation continues.*

Think of it in these terms. When our minds aren't necessarily occupied, they think of God. *The incarnation continues.* We receive criticism with gratitude and joy. *The incarnation continues.* We rejoice when others outshine us. *The incarnation continues.* We give liberally. *The incarnation continues.* We root for our competitors to succeed. *The incarnation continues.* We forgive and do good to wrongdoers. *The incarnation continues.* You get the idea. The incarnation continues, in our bodies, every time we think, feel, will, act, and react as Jesus would.

Suck Orderliness from the Spiritual Realm

But it will continue in us only if we have spiritual power.

Spiritual power begins when we apprentice ourselves to Jesus. We

make and carry out the decision to be with Him in order to become like Him and to learn and do all that He says. When we do that, the Holy Spirit regenerates us. That means He gives us the life power to act upon and interact with the spiritual realm of God and His kingdom.

Having that power, we then use it to do just that. Austrian physicist and Nobel Prize winner Erwin Schrodinger wrote an essay titled *What Is Life*. He explained in it how biological life is sustained and enhanced: **“The device by which an organism maintains itself stationary at a fairly high level of orderliness . . . really consists in continually sucking orderliness from its environment.”** What he wrote about biological life is just as true of spiritual life. To have a high level of spiritual life and thus psychological, social, and biological life, we must **“suck orderliness”** from the spiritual realm.

We do that the same way Jesus did. There are certain practices that link us with God and His kingdom and draw their substance into us. They include solitude and silence, study, fasting, prayer, worship, fellowship, purposeful obedience, practicing God’s presence, sacrificing, serving, thanksgiving, secrecy, frugality, confession, and submission. Jesus had the spiritual life He had because He routinely carried out those practices. We must do the same. First, we learn what we need to know about them. Our church website has a *Disciples ‘R’ Us* tab that contains a study titled *The Power to Live*. That study explains what we need to know about those practices. Second, once we’ve learned that, we then devotedly carry out those practices. Doing so in turn **“sucks orderliness”** from the spiritual realm, which then makes our lives incarnations of Jesus.

Conclusion

I saw a sign in a store that said **“Only 30 days to Christmas.”** But based on what I’ve preached about today, we know that Christmas is already here. The fact is that every day is Christmas day. Why? It’s because in the day-to-day life of disciples of Jesus, *the incarnation continues*.