**THE REVELATION TO JOHN ABOUT THE BIRTH OF JESUS - John 1:1-14**

*(Pastor Lloyd’s sermon notes from the 5th of December 2021)*

When the US President George Bush flew into Bagdad one Christmas some years ago, on a secret visit, every detail planned, every contingency catered for, security, emergency medical supplies with his blood type, bomb squads, sniffer dogs, police snipers, no-fly zones for aircraft, …. nothing was too much trouble to get it right. But when God visited our world one other Christmas night it was a very different scenario. A 15-year-old pregnant teenage girl, she will arrive by donkey, she will come to Bethlehem on a night when the village is full of visitors, be born in a dirty cowshed out the back of the local pub, and later on a jealous King Herod will be trying to kill him and every other male baby born at that time.... what kind of a strategy is that for God to visit planet earth?

*‘And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, we have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14*

While I appreciate the way Matthew links his gospel to Jewish history, the way Mark provides the bare-bones detail of Jesus' remarkable life, and the way doctor Luke shares with us the accurate detail of a medical professional – I love the way John brings something so different – his gospel is galactic in its reach. Known as the beloved disciple, John starts his story with the verses for today’s message – akin to Do Re Mi in the Sound of Music – “Let’s start at the very Beginning”!  I’ve written today's message under three headings: The Word in the Beginning, The Word at last Becoming, and the Word now Beaming.

**THE WORD IN THE BEGINNING** - Whether you realise it or not – all of History is tied up with Jesus and who He was, is, and will be. But John brings a very different account of who Jesus is by starting with who God is and in particular who the trinity is. Now don’t feel awkward about promoting Jesus as though in doing so you are not giving enough focus on the Father or the Spirit. They are one and the same. They are exactly the same in *essence*, *and in character*. There was a great bun fight in the few hundred years of the church over the trinity…which was finally settled in 325AD at the Council of Nicaea. From where we get the Nicaean Creed. You see in those first few hundred years people wanted to separate Jesus from the Father and the Spirit – he was surely not fully God for God could not have dwelt inside a human body. And we cannot have God dying on a Roman cross. Something of God must have departed from Jesus just before he died. Now, do you see why Paul writing his letter in his books like Colossians spells out about who Jesus is? John picks up this in his gospel. In the beginning (before anything else that was) Jesus was there with the Spirit and the Father in the form of the Word (logos). And the world was made through him and he sustains the world now. If you pick up your Bible and rethink your way around how the world came to be, and who was involved and put Jesus in there front and centre you won’t be far from the truth. You see Jesus John tells us did not arrive on this planet 2000 years ago. He is the same as the Father and the same as the Spirit in composition (essence) from the beginning of time.

Our thinking has real trouble at this point – so here is a clumsy illustration that might help throw some light on this. Look at these three chairs – each the same as the other yet separate. Now, look what happens when I turn them towards each other. They are a trinity of chairs!  The chairs are ‘face to face’ with each other. Now that face to face is exactly what the Bible teaches us about the trinity in Genesis Chapter 1.….and friends this is a picture of what God in essence is and has been from all time.

Verse 6 - *God is* *relational*! When you and I were created and God said we are made in his image – then this in part is what he is referring to. We are made for relationship! Firstly, with him and then with each other. There is a deep thirst inside each of us for authentic relationships.

Then Verse 7 - *God the Trinity is connected!* These chairs while different in function from each other are deeply *connected* by the essence of who they are! The *Word is the same as the Father as the same as the Spirit*… yet each can still *function* in their roles. *The Father is God above us; the Word (Jesus) is God with us and the Spirit is God in us*. And this connection was what got lost when we sinned, instead of connection there was *separation*. And the Bible is the story of the Trinity *bringing connection from separation*. Most times when you see separation it’s the result of sin and failure in our lives. So next time you think about Jesus think Logos…. creation and trinity and think restored order and worship in new heavens and earth!

**THE WORD AT LAST BECOMING** - In the movie entitled ‘Oh God’ George Burns plays the part of God and he appears as a supermarket manager dressed as an old man, wearing tennis shoes and a fishing hat. When asked why he is dressed that Burns replies ‘I picked a look you could understand!’

Right through the Old Testament, there was this promise of a Messiah who would come and rescue the nation and put right the wrongs and injustices, and lead the people forwards.

John 1: 14 *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. To use George Burns quote dressed in a look we could understand, And He came to us. The Message Bible puts it this way…. 10. *‘The Word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood’*…. It can be translated literally – “God pitched his tent among us”.

Actually, the KJV is the word *‘tabernacled’ among us* (made his home – literally means pitched his tent) and came to live with us. The word tabernacle you will know comes from the Old Testament in the wilderness where the presence of God dwelt among his people. Hebrew words tell stories in their construction. The root meaning of the Hebrew word for tabernacle has the same constructs as the Hebrew word Shekinah – which is a reference to the *glory* of the presence of God.  So now you will see that there is a welding together of these two things, tabernacle, and glory.  So, you could say the Word came to “pitch his tent and was gloried among us”! – *“And we beheld his glory full of grace and truth”* John 1:14. This is the amazing teaching that comes from John’s gospel. The Trinity lives in relationship with each other from the beginning. And now John says this Logos that is God himself *becomes* one of us!

You don’t understand Christmas until you have a *revelation of the trinity and*who Jesus is. It’s all about Him!  John is not just the writer of the fourth gospel he is also the writer of the Revelation. And if you were to take all the books of the Bible out from John’s gospel and go straight from John to Revelation you would see the continuing story and the same writing style. John presents this same Logos Jesus now in heaven and the story carries on to the end of time. Where it is still all about who? Jesus! You see there is no hierarchal competition in the trinity. The Son glorifies the Father, the Father the Son the Spirit glorifies Jesus and on it goes…. Jesus never acts independently of the Father or the Spirit. Together they are a perfect unity and harmony. If you have difficulty getting your head around trinity and creation – it only gets more amazing when this glory essence of God breaks into our world, not in lightning and thunder, or earthquake, but in weakness, dependency, and vulnerability of a baby born to an unwed but betrothed couple in a cowshed!

Is it any wonder that few saw this coming nor hardly recognised the significance of the occasion? We’ve heard the story so often something of the wonder of it is lost on us. That this trinity decided to become one of us. Creator and creation were fused in a loving embrace.

*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself***2 Corinthians 5:19 (Amplified)** Is the great statement from Paul. Don’t separate the trinity for the sake of a tidy and believable theology! The Father and the Spirit were in Christ when He walked this earth – and when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane and suffered on the cross – was it still the trinity suffering together for the world they together loved? I think John chose carefully the word ‘flesh’ when he wrote these words. It means the human part of us that is capable of independence and sin. And having that capacity to sin is essential to our salvation. Pauls speaks of this as a great mystery – wonder and amazement are at the core of this good news.

**THE WORD IS NOW BEAMING** – I wanted to have three ‘B’s Beginning, Becoming, and Beaming. But I think Beaming puts it well.  John speaks of this message going out from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – they are projecting and dispensing the Shekinah glory into the hearts of those who receive the revelation of who Jesus really is by the Holy Spirit – God in us! This beaming or shining of God himself is not just resident inside the trinity – it is not just the essence of who God is, nor is it shared just by Father Son and Holy Spirit as they face each other. It is *shed abroad in our hearts* by the Holy Spirit living inside each of us. The conversion language we use is quite awkward when we try to describe ‘receiving Jesus’ into our lives – or choosing him!  It could equally be described as affirming a revelation of who Jesus is!  Everything that God is the Spirit is… and this has now come to reside inside you. If you can excuse the language – we are now ‘little Jesus’s’! With the shining power of God inside beaming out for others to see. Get your Christology right and everything else will flow from there.  Now just one word of warning – don’t fall into the error that some in the early church did. This truth was so amazing that God lives in us – then we become little Gods! Then God is *in all of us* and that just one step away from pantheism…. God is in everything – in creation in us. We as Paul clearly teaches are ‘carriers’ of the presence of God – of the person of Jesus by the Spirit of God…. beaming this shekinah glory to others. Here’s the secret – it didn’t all start in a manger at Bethlehem. It started before all time with the Father, Son, and Spirit – who said to each other –Lets make man in our image so they can be *relational and connected* like us. Let's put them in an *amazing world* where everything is for their enjoyment. You know what happened…. *separation occurred*. And the great story of Trinity is a *rescue and restoration plan* to connect again that which is broken and divorced and Christmas was where the trinity embarked upon their rescue plan. Now hear again the Nicaean Creed from 325AD – see if you can listen for the teaching beneath and inside these words that come from scripture and why it was so important to nail this once and for all.

*We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.*

The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once told a story of a very rich king whose wealth and power were known around the world, but he had no queen at his palace. One day while riding through the streets of a small village he saw a beautiful peasant girl and his heart was struck. He wanted her as queen more than anything else. He rode by her house day after day with the mere hope of seeing her. He wondered to himself how he could secure her love. Should I decree it, so she would be forced to love and marry me he wondered? Then he wondered about visiting her in person dressed in his finest royal clothes with rings and sword, I will overwhelm her with my status, but as he pondered the idea, he knew this would not work, he would always wonder if she loved him for his riches and power. Then he decided to dress as a peasant, come to her village and in this disguise approach her house, he would work as a peasant, live with her people – and secure her love by becoming like her… which he did, only then would he truly know that she loved him for who he was. John’s revelation - this Trinity God of the BEGINNING wants to win over your affections, and he did this by BECOMING like you to win your love. And in doing so he wants you to BEAM project and dispense his Shekinah into others around you.