

Sermons at
First Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Reggie Denton, Pastor

January 4, 2026 (Christmas 2)
John 1:1-14

There were two brothers, 8 and 10 years old, who were EXCEEDINGLY mischievous. Whatever went wrong in the neighborhood, it turned out THEY had a hand in it. Their parents were at their WITS' END trying to CONTROL these two.

They heard about a pastor nearby who worked with delinquent boys, so the mother decided to ask the pastor to talk to them. He agreed, but said he wanted to see the YOUNGER boy first. So the mother sent him to the pastor.

The pastor wanted the boy to realize that God was EVERYWHERE and could SEE everything he DID. He pointed his FINGER at the boy and asked, "Where is God?"

The boy said nothing.

Again, louder, the pastor pointed at the boy and asked, "Where is God?"

Again, the boy said nothing.

A third time, in a louder, firmer voice, the pastor leaned across his desk and put his finger almost to the boy's nose, and asked, "Where is God?"

The boy panicked and ran all the way home. Finding his older brother, he dragged him upstairs to their room, where they usually PLOTTED their trouble, and he said, "We're in BIG trouble NOW."

The older boy asked, "What do you MEAN, BIG trouble?"

His brother shouted, "GOD is MISSING, and they think WE DID it!"

With all that had happened in the history of Israel, it SEEMED to them that God WAS MISSING, that God had LEFT them. But through the prophets, they heard the wondrous news that God was NOT LOST, or MISSING. God was COMING to them, to DWELL AMONG them AGAIN.

All through Advent, that was the message: God is COMING. Now, in these days of Christmas (and yes, it IS STILL Christmas), we have the wondrous Good News that that day HAS come—God is HERE! God is WITH us!

In His SON, God personally came to be with us, as ONE of us, in flesh and blood, so that we might know God's love and forgiveness, so we might know the light, and grace, and life that never ends.

There's ANOTHER story of two OTHER brothers, adults, who had a falling out, and a BAD one. They didn't speak for a long time.

Then it occurs to one of them that the situation just isn't right. He writes a letter to his brother, asking that they make peace. He receives no reply, but thinks "I'll try again." So he writes ANOTHER letter and sends THIS one Federal Express. But still no reply. But he doesn't give up. He sends a PERSONAL MESSENGER that SHARES his HEARTFELT desire to live as a FAMILY again. But even THAT gets no response.

So then, the man decides, one bitterly cold winter's night, to brave the howling wind and deep snow to go to his brother's house. He arrives out of breath, covered with snow, PETRIFIED with the cold. He REPEATS his invitation FACE-TO-FACE to be a FAMILY again.

And then it begins to dawn on his brother that, here in front of him, is a REAL human being, frozen, drenched with snow, and wheezing for air, and his HEART MELTS. And he FINALLY says, "Yes."

Friends, that brother reaching out is like the Lord. God has written us letters, sent us messengers, even PROPHETS, tried SO MANY TIMES to reach out to us, and we haven't answered. Finally, in the Christ Child, God's OWN child, God has PERSONALLY come to make things RIGHT again.

This SECOND Sunday of Christmas, we are REMINDED that, in Christ, God has CHANGED the WORLD. This morning we heard a different KIND of Christmas story. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was WITH God, and the Word WAS God....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." That's JOHN'S Christmas story.

If JOHN'S Gospel were the ONLY one we had, THIS is all that we would know about Jesus' birth – that BEFORE his name was Jesus, his name was the WORD, and he was WITH God from the very BEGINNING of time, bringing things into being, making things happen, shining light into the darkness.

He was God's own self, God's own heart, God's LIFE IN the world. He was the breath inside all living things. He was the spark that charged peoples' hearts. He was the space between the stars. He was the fire inside the sun.

John goes on to say that not everyone BELIEVED that message. Many were BLINDED by his light, and PREFERRED the darkness they KNEW to the light they did NOT know. So God decided to speak in a NEW way.

You've heard of BODY language. God decided to GIVE his words a BODY. JESUS IS BODY LANGUAGE. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us...full of grace and truth."

The Gospel of John is telling us about an encounter with the Holy One. God's "Word," that CREATED heaven and earth, was TRANSLATED – into a PERSON. God's self, God's heart, God's LIFE were concentrated into ONE mortal life on this earth. And as a result, nothing would EVER be the SAME.

The Christmas stories we know from Matthew and Luke tell us about the birth of the Christ-child. JOHN tells us what it MEANS. God saw that something needed to change, so God changed EVERYTHING. God broke INTO our world and did something that no one had ever IMAGINED could happen. The ALMIGHTY GOD, THE CREATOR of the UNIVERSE, became one of US.

The glorious truth is that we don't have to wonder WHERE God is, or what God is LIKE. God ISN'T MISSING. In Jesus, God is WITH us. For Christians, Jesus is the FULLEST REVELATION of God. As I said Christmas Eve, if we want to KNOW God, we look at JESUS. If we want to hear the VOICE of God, we LISTEN to JESUS. If we want to be CLOSE to God, we COME to Jesus, for he IS God WITH us.

What we DISCOVER in Jesus is that God never WAS lost; WE were. And, in JESUS, God has FOUND us. Amen.