

Sermon Christmas Day A
December 25, 2019
John 1:1-14

**With his request approved by management,
A local news station cameraman quickly used his cell phone
To call the local airport to charter a flight.
He was told a twin-engine plane
Would be waiting for him at the airport.**

**Arriving at the airfield, he spotted a plane
Warming up outside a hanger.
He jumped in with his bag, slammed the door shut,
And shouted, "Let's go!"**

**The pilot dutifully taxied out, swung the plane into the wind
And took off.**

**Once in the air, the cameraman instructed the pilot,
"Fly over the valley and make low passes
So I can get shots of the fires on the hillsides."**

"Why?" asked the pilot.

**"Because I'm a cameraman for the local news," he responded,
"And I need to get some close-up shots."**

**The pilot was strangely silent for a moment,
Finally, he stammered,
"So, what you're telling me is...
You're not my flight instructor?"**

**Cases of mistaken identity often form the comedic core
Of many narratives in many cultures.**

We expect someone in particular,
Experience a series of ironically cohesive events,
And come to find out
We aren't with the person we expected.

When I was younger and would answer the phone at home,
My pre-adolescent voice sounded quite like my mother's.

"Oh, hi Laurie!" the caller would exclaim,
And with all the bass an 8-year old could muster,
"No this is David, let me get her for you," I replied,
Quite put out that my vocal identity
Had not yet distinguished itself.

To this day I still answer the phone with my own name,
A habit formed out of necessity and annoyance,
Long before I began being confused for my dad.

We do many things to set ourselves apart from others.
We rightly long to discern who we are
And how we fit into the world around us.

We teach and encourage children, youth, and teenagers
To explore their uniqueness,
Give them space to discern their identities.
Provide opportunities for growth
In their sense of self.

We are always trying to figure out who we are,
What we are about, how we fit in.

We deeply desire to know that we are special,
That “me-ness” and “you-ness” means something,
That “I” matter.

But the journey is complex,
The path to meaning is crooked and bumpy,
Because humanity has a terrible tendency
To look upon others and decide
That their “me-ness” doesn’t mean anything.
That their “you-ness” is not special,
Because it doesn’t fit into
My preconceived box.

The sounds of passing judgement against another person’s “me-ness”
Echo across the globe, our country, our backyards,
Or within our own homes.

It echoes within our own selves,
When one looks into the mirror
And doesn’t like the one reflected back.

That judgment, those echoes,
Those painful reflections in the mirror
Don’t stop just because it’s Christmas
And we’re supposed to be happy and merry.

Systems that break down rather than build up
Don’t take time off.
They don’t wait for the holiday season to end
To sow seeds of discord and strife.

**Which is precisely why we take this break and remember
That what happened that dark night long ago
Is so much more significant than a festive birthday party.**

**The fourth gospel we hear this morning helps us remember
That God has put on flesh
And is moving in.**

**John reminds us that incarnation of the very Word means
That God choses to enter into our humanity,
Into all of its fullness and faults,
All of its power and pain,
All of its joys and sorrows.**

**And at the same time,
The incarnation is a revelation of who we are.
In it, through it, because of it,
We begin to realize,
That in God's decision to become human,
Our humanity matters.**

**The real me, the real you, the real stranger...
That matters.**

**Our flesh-y-ness, our searching, our longing,
Our hope and dreams, our disappointments and shortcomings,
They are all wrapped up in the present
Of Christ's presence:
And those things are loved.**

**They have been loved from the beginning,
From the Word that called creation into being.
They are loved by the light of the world,
The light that shines in the darkest places of our lives.
And they will always be loved by God made flesh,
That not only goes where we go,
But is who we are.**

**Christmas is where we find in the manger our true selves.
The real me. The real you.
The real us created in love, to love.**

**To love and serve the Lord by loving and serving our neighbor:
Other fleshy humans who mean something too.**

Martin Luther sums it up like this:

***The shepherds went to Bethlehem,
And when they found the baby they knelt in adoration.
Then they told the whole countryside round about
What had come to pass.***

***And then we read that “the shepherds returned.”
And that certainly must be a mistake.***

***But no, it says they returned.
And where to?
To their calling – to their sheep.
And a very good thing for their sheep indeed.***

**It's been said before, but it bears repeating every year,
Because every year we fleshy beings need to remember:
Christmas is not a day, it a way of life...
A way of living.**

**It is the yearly, daily, moment by moment remembering
That God has put on flesh and dwells among us...
Dwells in, and around, and through you.**

**A you that is loved.
A you that is cherished.
A you that is washed and fed and nourished.
A you called to make a difference in the world.
A you that means something.**

**A you whose imperfect humanity
Is so perfectly loved by God,
That our identities will never be mistaken again.**