



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2017

Words Count

John 1:1-14

Imagine the number of words most of us speak in one day... imagine at what age children can put together a sentence... what about the old saying that "sticks and stone can break my bones, but words can never hurt me."

Imagine the use of words in our culture. What is the difference between Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays; what words are used to express the meaning of special days in the world religions: Hanukkah, Diwali, Ramadan. Or, what about those whose religions have no holidays with words?

Words count: good words, bad words, kind words, cursing words; words carry meaning in how we speak them, the tone we use, and the impact once words are spoken.

The Gospel Reading has the very word, "WORD." When the written word is "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." What in the world does that mean for us in this time that carries its own word, Advent?

One of our ABC students asked a question in a recent Worship Sermon Summary: "Are we supposed to do something specific during Advent? Do we have to worship in different ways?"

Really good questions. Yes, we do things differently in Advent because we have four weeks to prepare and to get ready for the birthday of Jesus.

Think about that and the things we do to get ready for the birth of a baby. Trust me we have done it twice and the whole business is both intentional, timely, and expensive. Don't believe that? Ask Emily and Adam©

It takes time physically, mentally, and emotionally. Good to add spiritually too! And most often it takes 9 months; in Advent, four weeks.

So, we have been learning to wait a bit; to run counter the cultural retailing of the season and to establish our own traditions---to wait on the Lord who is coming soon.

Today, we celebrate THE WORD OF CREATION. To believe that words have power and the Word of God was at creation bringing into real time all that we experience and share in God's creation.

In that act of Creation we all have received life and light. The breath we share and the creation we are called to take care of each day.

But, more so, we celebrate THE WORD MADE FLESH. John the Baptist was the one who first shared the words of GOOD NEWS and told everyone that no darkness could overwhelm the light or still the life of the One coming soon. The One we have come to know as Jesus, son of Mary and Joseph who came into the world to show us the meaning of God's love for all, God's forgiveness of all, and in whom we would come to know that each of us IS child of God. Like "E". Do you know what the word Ozioma means? "Good News" in Nigerian Igbo. A word in her name is very special, as she is a special child of God!

Like each of us who have been born, Jesus is the Word that became flesh, human, one of us and lived in this world. And those who saw him, heard him, knew him began to believe, to trust that Jesus is God's only Son, who taught us to be a children of a heavenly father who was God's only son.

It is a mystery, but that belief, that trust, that idea helps us to welcome him as a newborn in our world every year at Christmas--Christ-mas.

Advent is a time to learn and to see anew that this Word is the One who shows us the way to love one another, forgiven to forgive...and to learn the words that He is "grace" and "truth."

This Lord's Day we celebrate THE WORD FOR YOU AND ME. And it is the promise of Jesus, the child of God, Son of God, who brings us to life in the world we share.

One of my favorite mentors in my first course in seminary said that people should first approach Jesus through His treatment of children. In the Roman world, children were expendable. Yet, those who follow the Way of Jesus were the nurturers, the community of care which was like a gated garden of life.

How often I celebrate the children of congregation. You will guess that some of those I first Baptized have brought their children to the Font, they were confirmed, some married, a few buried in the promise that this Jesus the Word spoke words of inclusion in a world often filled with confusion. It is about the children!

This Jesus is the One who asked that the children be brought to him for a blessing. Sometimes at the protest of even his own. He said, "Forbid them not. For is you would see the kingdom of God, this is what it looks like."

Advent is the time to prepare for God's coming in a most simple way: the birth of a child. And in Christ, each of us is renamed, resettled into the truth that no matter old we became, we are signed by the Cross and forever a child of God.

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near. Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

He is coming soon.