

ISAIAH 52:7-10; HEBREWS 1:1-12

JOHN 1:1-18 [RSV]

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God; 3 all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. **9 The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. 11 He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.** 15 (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'") 16 And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

When our Lord comes down to Earth, what will that be like for him?

How comfortable will he be? Will he be like an alien coming to a foreign place where he will always be a bit strange?

God the Son is, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, eternal, almighty God. So what will it be like for him to take on human flesh, to be constricted, as we are, by time and space, and to walk around this material creation?

John 1:11:

He came to his own, and his own people received him not.

God the Son comes down to Earth, takes on our humanity, so that he is now the Word made flesh dwelling among us, and *he* is not uncomfortable at all. He is right here where he wants to be. He is not alien or unfamiliar or foreign to our world, rather, the Apostle John says, ***He came to his own.***

He is less like an alien or foreigner than like a boy getting a set of Legos for Christmas, who then happily unwraps the Legos, forgetting all else as he connects one Lego to another, higher and higher, until he's constructed a whole house, and then even a whole neighborhood, and then even people and pets to place into the neighborhood. It's his—his own. His hands connected each one, and all of it was done through him. For that boy to put his hands into the Lego construction project, this is not strange or alien at all for him. It's familiar to him. He loves what he has created. He has put each one where he wants it.

It is his joy, his pride, and there is nowhere he would rather be.

The Word of God came into the world, came to his own, to those he loves, and there is nowhere else he would rather be. He became flesh, became a human.

We're the ones to whom he came. Not just to us, of course; also to those living before us, Noah and Abraham, and all those Old Testament saints, and also to those coming after us, the generations of the church following—to all of us, the children of Adam and Eve, we are the ones to whom he came, so that as he stands here upon the Earth, we finally see what it means to be truly human.

What does it mean to be human?

The philosophers throughout the ages have tried to answer that question. There is mind and body, soul and spirit, rationality and will; by piecing these things together, Is this how we will know what it means to be human?

The philosopher Thomas Hobbes said that “humans are guided by animalistic instincts and a ruthless struggle for self-preservation.”

So Hobbes has us looking at humans as being animalistic, and that tells us how we would view not only ourselves, but also our neighbor. If we're to be known as animals, then I can think of myself as being, say, a dog, and that tells me how I see my neighbor. I can just look over at my neighbor's house with animalistic eyes, and I see his trash can, Do I get any free food there? I look under his bushes, Any rabbits to chase? I look out at his front sidewalk, Is there a fire-hydrant there, because, as a dog, I know what to do with that too?

So the Word of God comes to the world, and what does he see? He sees a bunch of humans—they are all his creation—and yet these humans see *themselves* not as the Image of God on Earth, but as animals, each one operating on instinct and struggling for self-preservation.

The Word of God comes to Earth, he himself becomes a Man, and he takes the Name Jesus, so that all the other humans can walk up to him and talk with him, can approach him, eat and drink with him, and even can argue with him, challenge him, and even attack him.

The Word of God, Jesus, stands on the Earth, among all other humans, and finally, we see what it truly means to be a man. A true human, a man or woman, the way God created us to be before we brought sin into the world and started acting toward one another like animals in a ruthless struggle of self-preservation.

So when the Word of God became flesh and lived among us, What *did* we see? What

does the true Man look like?

John 1:10:

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.

He is the One true Man, the new Adam, the one human on Earth who has no sin, is without guilt, is unstained by shame, and yet, when we look at him, we know him not.

We were expecting the true Man to look like, what? Would we know him according to his physical stature, maybe he would be a little taller, a little stronger, a little more handsome than all other men? Would we know him by his mind? Maybe he would be a little more intelligent, and little more rational, more insightful than all other men.

What were we expecting, than when he did come to Earth as the New Man, we knew him not?

This is what we were *not* expecting, yet should have been expecting, were we to know him, John 1:14:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Full of *grace*. We weren't expecting that. No sinner was. *Grace* means the giving of gifts. *Grace* means that to those expecting judgement and retribution, you freely and abundantly give out, instead, the kindness and love of God.

Grace means that the sinner no longer lives according to his own worthiness, but is given life according to the worthiness of the One who became flesh to dwell among us.

Grace means that we now not only see God as the giver of all good gifts, but we also know ourselves to be his Image on Earth, so that we are the ones acting toward our neighbor not as instinctive animals, but as those showing kindness and dispensing the gifts of our God.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Truth means that there is a reality, a truth, of how we stand before our Father in Heaven. If the old reality was that we stood according to our sinful flesh, that we stood as neighbors showing retribution to each other, the new reality, the truth that we know only by looking at the Man Christ Jesus, is that he came giving grace upon grace, and he has forgiven our sins and made us to stand before his Father as his honored brothers and sisters, true humans, along with him.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

We behold his glory. We look upon it, we perceive it, our eyes see it, our ears hear it, our mouths taste it—we behold his glory.

What is this glory? It is a Man, Christ Jesus, walking up to a leper, putting his own hand on the diseased skin, and saying, *You are clean.*

His glory—it is a Man seeing the sinners and drunks, and instead of walking away, looking for a better class of friends, going to their homes and eating with them, speaking with them as only a friend can, giving them encouragement and hope, telling them that they are his beloved friends for eternity.

His glory—it is Jesus, the true Man, seeing those who are spitting on him, calling him names, even crucifying him, and instead of acting like a cornered animal, turning to his Father and saying, *Father, forgive them, they don't even know their own sin.*

We behold his glory—it is him coming to us, to each of us and our families, and calling us his own in Baptism, forgiving us, promising to be with us always, even until the end of the ages. His glory is him setting a servant in front of his people to speak his words into their ears, saying, *As an ordained servant of Christ Jesus, I forgive you your sins.* His glory is him coming among us in his Body and Blood, forgiving our sins and telling us, *You are my Own.*

We behold his glory. We look upon the Man Jesus, and finally we see the true Man, the Man who is the Image of God on Earth. We see, finally, what it truly means to be a human.

Thomas Hobbes may have been right when he spoke of humans as animalistic, instinctually struggling for self. But he would only have been describing man according to the sinful nature.

Jesus came among sinners, and in Jesus we see the true Man, showing mercy, speaking kindness, dispensing gifts, encouraging those who despair, comforting those who are in pain, forgiving—always forgiving—the sinner.

He forgives us. He comes among us and we behold his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, and he has come among his own. We belong to him.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.