

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 12/11/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, December 12, you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those who are unhoused and who struggle to find adequate places to sleep and live. Pray that they might find appropriate living spaces that also reflect the dignity all people deserve. Ask GOD'S blessing upon all who work to provide housing for those in need.*

When talking about the WORD of GOD, most people are referring to the Bible. But I think it might be helpful for us to rather realize that it is CHRIST HIMSELF who is the true WORD of GOD. John's Gospel begins by telling us that "In the beginning was the WORD." This passage refers back to Genesis 1 and the first creation story. When GOD spoke, through the WORD everything was created. It was by the power of GOD'S WORD.

John continues to explain that by saying "the WORD was with GOD and the WORD was GOD," again proclaiming what is also announced in that Genesis creation story. The WORD was in the beginning and the WORD was GOD. John continues, "HE was with GOD in the beginning," again confirming what Genesis 1 says in the creation story. "Through HIM all things were made; without HIM nothing was made that has been made." The WORD is the creative power of GOD, not separate from GOD but part of GOD GODSELF.

And then John names what we celebrate each Christmas: "The WORD became flesh and made HIS dwelling among us." There are those who will claim that JESUS did not exist until HE was born in Bethlehem. But the WORD who became human flesh as JESUS was there in the very beginning. And the WORD, JESUS, was and is GOD.

So, it also becomes important to recognize that when we speak or think about GOD'S WORD, we focus on JESUS CHRIST. When we read the Bible with the eyes of faith, we will find the WORD of GOD, a revealing of who GOD is and what GOD is like. And JESUS, the WORD of GOD who became flesh, is the best image we can find of GOD. I like to say that JESUS is GOD'S "selfie." JESUS is the best representation, characterization, revealing, presentation (none of these words is fully capturing this idea) of GOD. The WORD was with GOD and the WORD was GOD and the WORD became flesh in the ONE called JESUS.

Sometimes, people pick out portions of scripture and use them to claim GOD'S condemnation or judgment on some people. On the ones who don't fit in. Or who we don't like. Or who we want to keep out. This "weaponization" (a hot word today) of the Bible as the WORD of GOD ("GOD said it. I believe it. That settles it.") fails to look at the true WORD of GOD. Who did JESUS condemn? How did JESUS treat those who didn't fit in or who were being kept out? It's ironic that some will use the "WORD of GOD" to judge people who are very much like the ones with whom the true WORD of GOD spent time.

Seeing JESUS as the WORD of GOD can change things. How we hear and see JESUS gives us a powerful way of understanding the WORD of GOD. And we can best follow the WORD of GOD when we do our best to follow the true WORD of GOD, JESUS.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey