

## Written Copy: John 1:10-14 “The God Who Longs to Be with Us”

### Midweek Advent Service #2

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### Text: John 1:10-14

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

#### Exegetical Statement (the text’s context)

The incarnation is God the Son, who has always been in intimate union with the Father, coming down to tabernacle with us, to set up His tent among us by intimately joining Himself with our humanity. He cloaked His divinity in the tent of His humanity. He came to declare to mankind who God truly is. As His disciples contemplated Him, His teachings, His miracles, His grace, they actually beheld the LORD that no man had ever seen. And they gained a peek at His unbridled glory in the Transfiguration. This was the Creator of all things entering His creation, which did not recognize Him, and refused to acknowledge who He revealed Himself to be. But for all who were given the ability to hold fast by faith to who He really is, Christ authorized them to become children of the Heavenly Father. This did not happen because of who their earthly Father was, or because they chose it or willed it, but because by faith they were born again into His family. John the Baptist pointed Him out as the one who, although coming onto the scene after him, superseded him in importance because He existed as God the Son before John was even born. And He has come to grant to all who believe in Him a super abundance of grace from the fullness of Himself. While the Law was given through the mediation of Moses, grace and truth came into this world through Jesus Christ

#### Focus Statement:

The LORD showed His great desire to have intimate fellowship and Communion with His creation by setting up His tent and real presence among them in the OT Tabernacle. In order for the Holy God to dwell with His sins full people He cloaked Himself and created protective separation. In Christ He came to permanently dwell with His creation in the tent that is His humanity. By the gift of faith we are given the power to perceive who He really is, and through faith in His name receive the superabundance of grace He came to give.

#### Function Statement:

##### Why it’s important to know:

In these troubling times we can lose sight of how intimately our God chooses to dwell with us, and how He has in the past, is now, and will for eternity to come.

##### What the hearer should do as a result:

Rejoice in the true gift that the birth of Christ is, realizing that He took on flesh to dwell with us by faith now, through the means of grace, and forever with Him I intimately in Eternal Life.

#### Subject Sentence: In Christ, God is permanently tabernacling with us

## **Introduction: The Pain of Separation**

There is no other way to put it, COVID isolation and separation sucks. This latest resurgence of the Virus, including my own bout with it, as well as a few others in our midst, has resulted in things returning to where we were a year ago. Now I fully understand that for some of you, the need to stay away, the need to quarantine yourself or isolate, is warranted due to your particular health situation. It has resulted in a dramatic drop in attendance, and I fully realize why. But it still sucks. As a Pastor I was looking forward to an Advent and Christmas celebration that was a return to years gone by. Now, I'm not sure what it will be like.

I know from my own time of quarantine and Isolation from COVID that being locked up and away from people just sucks. Even though I value my personal quiet time with the LORD, to have my time of fellowship taken away can be depressing. God has created us to be gregarious people, to enjoy each other's company and that special fellowship we have as the Church. Even when it's necessary to forgo it for your health or the health of others, it still sucks; for you and for us gathered here who miss you.

But please keep in mind that, even though separation might be the necessary thing now, it's not how God intended us to live out our lives forever going forward. And separation from being present in Church should never mean separation from Him. Our God is the God who longs to be present with us. And that fact is the focus of this sermon tonight.

## **Emmanuel: God with Them in the Tabernacle**

God longed to be present among His Old Testament people Israel. So much so that He came down and manifested Himself in the burning bush to call Moses to be His human mediator and shepherd to lead His people out of slavery and guide them on their way to the Promised Land that He would give them. Before His call Moses was an Egyptian schooled and trained prince who fled to become a shepherd. In leading God's people out of Egypt Moses used the education and training God had provided for him previously to shepherd God's people to Mt. Sinai. It was there that God clearly pronounced Himself to be their God and they His chosen nation. As those He chose and redeemed from slavery, who no longer knew God's will in their sinful hearts, He gave it to them when He inscribed the 10 Commandments on stone. He did this by appearing to Moses on Mt. Sinai in fire and smoke, a veiled manifestation of His glory. No one else could go up on the mountain except Moses. Why was this? Why the separation from the people? Why veil His true form from Moses? Because sinful man cannot stand in the unbridled, unrestrained presence of the Holy God and live.

God longed to be with His people in a personal way. But because of His holiness and their sin there must be separation. But God had a plan, He had the solution to this dilemma. And on Mt. Sinai He gave Moses His instructions for putting this plan into action. He gave Moses all the knowledge He needed to know to build the Tabernacle, which would be God's way of dwelling among His sinful people with the separation needed to protect them and for them to properly and reverently fear Him as the Almighty and Holy God. The name "Tabernacle" comes from the Hebrew verb meaning "to dwell"

So let's take a look at how God planned to dwell amongst His Old Testament people by means of the Tabernacle. The entire structure was intended to be an earthly representation of the spiritual reality of God's reigning and dwelling among His people. As **Hebrews 8:5** explains about all of the features of the Tabernacle **They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."** The tabernacle was completely God's design and Moses followed it to the letter.

The entire structure was approximately the length of ½ of a football field. The courtyard was partitioned off by a fence that surrounded it. This was the first degree of separation, only God's chosen people could enter the courtyard. Inside the courtyard was the brazen altar where the people brought their sacrifices which the priests offered up. Here the people confessed their sins and received the promise of God's forgiveness as the sacrificed animal took their place and died the death that their sins required. Since an animal is not human, many animals had to continually be sacrificed. And even then, they were no more than a place holder for the greater sacrifice that God had promised would come. That altar was also the place where they gave offerings that expressed their thanksgiving for God's gracious care and expressing their desire for fellowship with Him. Near the brazen altar was the large Brass Basin where the priests would wash themselves after sacrificing the animals and sprinkling their blood.

The center point of the tabernacle courtyard was the tentlike structure that was the Tabernacle itself. It was 45 feet long by 15 feet wide. This was the second degree of separation. Only the priests could enter into the tabernacle to perform the functions God had given them. The tabernacle itself was partitioned off into two rooms. The first, and biggest room was called the Holy Place. In this room sat the Table of the Bread of the Presence. This table was 3 feet long by 1 ½ feet wide by 2 ½ feet high. Upon this table would be placed 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel whose people encamped around the tabernacle courtyard. The message was God's people were always present before Him, and that He is the source of their nourishment, their daily bread. These loaves would be baked and replaced daily.

Also found in the Holy Place was the Golden Lampstand. This was 7 lamps set atop 6 branches, with one lamp atop the main pole. If you have seen pictures of the Jewish Menorah which is important in their celebration of Channukah in our day and age, know that it is fashioned after this Golden Lampstand. The practical function of the lampstand was to provide light in the Holy Place so the priests could see what they were doing. But it has an important spiritual symbolism: that of the 7-fold Spirit of God that brings the light of knowledge and faith amongst His people. 7 is a symbolic number representing God's completed work upon the earth, hence the 7 days of creation. The 7-fold Spirit is the Holy Spirit who has gone out over the entire world in all places and all times. In Scripture the lampstand had a great symbolic connection with God's Church. In Revelation the Apostle John sees in a vision 7 golden lampstands with the resurrected and glorified Christ standing among them. He is told that these lampstands represent all the Churches on earth. And the message to the Church, which at that time was suffering persecution, was to know by faith that Christ stands among them.

Also in the Holy Place was another smaller altar, the Altar of Incense. Here the priests were to burn daily a special mixture of incense that the LORD had given to Moses. This mixture and this alone was to be burned on this altar. The smoke that went up from it symbolized the prayers of the people going up before the presence of the LORD. This was evident from the place where this altar sat.

It sat before the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree of separation in the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. This room was portioned off from the Holy Place by a beautiful and elaborately designed curtain that hung from ceiling to floor, and from side to side. It created a separate room whose dimensions were a perfect cube: 15 feet long by 15 feet wide by 15 feet high. In this room sat the Ark of the Covenant. This ark was a chest that contained the tablets of stone upon which the finger of God had written the 10 commandments. The lid that covered the Ark was known as the "Atonement Cover" or "The Mercy Seat". It was here that the High Priest was allowed to enter only one time a year, bringing the blood of the sacrifice in and sprinkling it on the top of this cover, on the Mercy Seat. By doing so the Priest atoned for the sins of the people, and God had mercy upon them by not departing from them or destroying them. Of course the blood of the sacrificed animals was not the reason. The blood that was sprinkled looked forward to a better offering of blood to come.

In the Holy of Holies, manifesting Himself over the Ark of the Covenant, was the real presence of the LORD. He manifested Himself in a cloud of smoke during the day and a pillar of fire at night. Both of these were manifested over the Ark and up into the sky for all God's people to see and to know that their God was present with them, even though He must be separated from them because of their sinfulness. It was through this manifested presence that the LORD would lead them like a shepherd throughout their desert wanderings and all the way to edge of the Promised Land. When the cloud/pillar of fire would lift up off of the Holy of Holies, the people would prepare to move out from where they were camped. They would disassemble the Tabernacle and pack it up so that it could be carried by the Levites. They would follow the cloud/pillar of fire until it came to rest at the next spot, where they would set up camp. Once the Ark of the Covenant was placed back in the Holy of Holies the cloud/pillar of fire would descend and rest over top of it again. This is how God was Emmanuel with His Old Testament People, God present with them but cloaked and separated because of their sin.

## **Jesus: God Tabernacling with Us**

But God desired to dwell amongst His people in a more intimate way, without this degree of separation. And all of these things in that Old Testament Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem pointed toward a greater reality to come. That greater reality that we are preparing for this Advent Season. That greater reality that is the birth of the Baby of Bethlehem. **John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.** "Dwelt among us": a literal translation of this verse would read "And the Word became flesh and 'set up His tent among us', or He 'tabernacled among us'. The Word, as John tells us in **John 1:1-3 <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.** The great, and wonderful, and awesome, and mind-boggling reality of Christmas, of the incarnation, is that it's the LORD God Himself, God the Son, coming down to most intimately dwell with His sinful people, who He still very much loves.

By taking on human flesh, by God the Son's divine nature joining incarnationally with the human nature of the baby from Mary's womb, God could dwell in the most intimate fashion with His people. His divinity was cloaked in humanity. Sinful man was allowed to walk with Him, touch Him, eat with Him, and listen and be taught by the very voice of God. As John tells us "**we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth**". They saw it although cloaked in humanity. They perceived His glory as they heard Him teach with the authority that only belongs to God, and through His miracles that defied the laws of nature and exhibited a power and authority that only God has. On the mount of Transfiguration Jesus peeled back the corner of that cloaked divinity so that Peter, James, and John could get a glimpse of the glory that lay beneath, and that glimpse blew their minds.

But they most clearly saw who Jesus really is when He went to the cross and gave His life for them, and for all people. He became that one time sacrifice that all the Old Testament sacrifices looked forward to. His blood has made atonement for the sins of all men, for all of your sins. That was something only God could do, and in order to do so God had to become man so that He could taste death for you, for me for all. His death and resurrection fulfilled all that God has promised He would do for His fallen yet beloved creation by opening the door for all to have intimate communion with the Creator God.

**John 1:10-12** <sup>10</sup> **He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.** <sup>11</sup> **He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.** <sup>12</sup> **But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**

The Creator of all came down and tabernacled with His creation, yet the very world that He brought into existence by His spoken word "Let there be" did not recognize Him and did not receive Him. Why? Such as glorious and truth that is beyond human comprehension cannot be accepted by the human mind, not without the supernatural work of God. How were the Apostles able to receive Him? How were you and I able to receive Him? Because we believe in His name by the power and gift of faith, the gift that has come to you by the working of that 7-fold Spirit. He is present with the Father and the Son and came into your life through the waters of Baptism. He is God with you now, coming through our Scripture Lesson and these very words I preach. He is God with you, tabernacling with you through Word and Sacrament Worship. He is with you to shepherd you through this wilderness of COVID, and unrest, and school shootings, and international crisis. He is with you, truly God with you even when you are in quarantine. He brings Christ to you. He secures you in your faith, keeping you prepared for the Advent to come.

## **Conclusion**

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ promises to come again. And when He does, He will finally and completely fulfill His desired plan to be Emmanuel, God with us in the fullest sense. When He returns, He will provide for you a new glorified body, the body that you have now that will be made new and perfect, without sin or disease. He will raise you up and give to you eternal life, so that you can live with Him in intimate communion and with us His Church, forever.

Our God is the God who longs to be with us in the most intimate of ways. Our God is Emmanuel, God with us now by faith. He is God with us now and forever through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

