

C Christmas 2 1.5.25

John 1:1-18

Focus Statement: In the incarnation, God came to say, "same."

There's a poem hanging on the wall of my office. Well, less poem, more prose, but whatever. I love it because in a few short words, the author creates this beautiful feeling of connection. The piece is called "Same," and it reads like this.

I still haven't figured out how to keep my shower floor clean or make morning smoothies or respond to stress calmly. Same, same, same my friends tell me, a love note of sorts. Maybe the world doesn't need us to cut down on carbs or make more money or waste less time. Maybe instead it needs us to reach out to those who feel alone in their messy homes or difficult relationships or unresolved issues. To impress less and connect more. To share one simple message: Same. Same, same, same.

What I love about these few lines is, I don't know about you, but I don't like the mess of my life available for public viewing. We blame social media for our false expectations, and certainly social media projects these very cleaned up, curated versions of people's lives, but I don't think it's a modern concern, I think it's a human concern. My social media presence these days is limited to posting the bulletin on Facebook, and still when a friend stopped by the other day for an unexpected visit, I hit go on the robot vacuum, loaded the dishwasher, and hid all Nik's toys under his play gym, trying to make our house looked slightly less like an explosion at the baby factory. I didn't want her to know the level of chaos that being a pastor during the Christmas season and having a six-month-old had wrought on our home. And in these few simple lines, the author simply says, hey, same. My mess and your mess

might not be the same mess, but we all have mess. I find such camaraderie in that promise, that I'm not alone in the chaos. Others have projects they'll get to but never do, people they need to call, relationships in need of mending. Same, friend, same.

It's the start of a new year, which is maybe the time we need this message the most.

Because it is the season of resolutions, the time in which the world collectively resolves to individually do better. Which, right off, notice the tension in that statement. We collectively resolve not to work together on our world but individually to work on ourselves, but I digress. The point is, it's New Year's Resolution season, the time where I avoid the Y for two weeks, waiting for all the people who resolved that this was the year they are going to get in shape to stop hogging all the treadmills. The second Friday of the new year is colloquially referred to as "Quitters Day" because it is the date by which most people have given up on their New Year's resolutions. And let me be clear, I share this without a hint of judgement. The only time I have ever kept my New Year's resolutions was the year I resolved to, in this order of priority, get a haircut, buy new shoes, and get a mattress. Because my hair had gotten really long, my shoes had holes in the soles, and I was sleeping on an air mattress with a slow leak, so I woke up on the floor every morning. And still, the only reason I accomplished the mattress one is I was complaining to my friend Yuan about my air mattress, and his mom had gotten a new bedroom set for Christmas, so he loaded up her old one and showed up at my house unannounced with a truck full of bedroom set. Were it not for Yuan, I can almost guarantee I would have slept on that flat air mattress another year until I moved to Michigan. As for more long-term resolutions, my shower floor too is

slippery, Jeeves the Robot vacuum spends much of his time charging, and my Christmas cards just arrived yesterday. So, Quitters Day, I get it. Same. Same, same, same.

It's New Years Day, the season of hopeful resolutions and January darkness, but in the church it's also, at least for another few days, still Christmas. I know everyone else has moved on, but we get Christmas until the 6th of January. And longer for us this year, because we're celebrating Epiphany next Sunday. And at Christmas we celebrate the birthday of Jesus. With all the mangers and sheep, Mary and Joseph, no room in the inn, it's easy to lose sight of the audacity of that claim. Which is why I love the prologue to John's Gospel. It's poetry, music, really, more than its narrative, and it evokes for us the feeling of what happens at Christmas. So let's unpack this just a little bit, so you can get a sense of scale here.

"In the beginning." Can you think of another book of the Bible that starts "In the beginning"? It's been a few years since we read it, this is also how Genesis one, one starts. "In the beginning the voice of God moved over the waters." John's Gospel quotes Genesis, taking us back to before the world began.

In the beginning was the Word. And the word translated as Word here is more like message or conversation. There's this sense of active communication. John again is pulling on this idea of the voice of God from Genesis. That the Word, with God, was God, was/is this same voice that called forth creation. Friends, we are cosmic here, this is all-encompassing. All things came into being through the voice of God, and what has come into being was life.

Life which is the light of all people. This light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it. Our text said overcome, but understand is another possible translation for that word, one that I find really interesting. Here is this light, and the darkness can't understand it, can't make sense of it, can't figure out what to do with this light. I have a baby, so I spend a lot of time flipping a light on in the middle of the night, and I'll tell you what, it takes your eyes and brain a minute to figure out what's happening when you're thrust from darkness into light, so I get not understanding light, to say nothing of light that is the light of God.

And so, to help us make sense of this light, God first sends us a friend. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John...[now] he himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light." To point out the light. To say, hey, look right here, don't miss it, this right here is the light. John shows us where to look because, just like John said, "the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

And that light came. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us." And because of that light, because of Jesus, God made flesh, we can come to know God. To quote a line from our communion liturgy, "In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see."

Dear people of God, the God we come to know in Jesus is not a New Years God. Ours is not a God of striving and reaching, of never quite getting there and never quite measuring up.

Ours is a Christmas God. Jesus Christ came so that God, God, like, the voice that moved over the waters God, could understand what it feels like to not be able to figure out how to keep God's shower floor clean or make morning smoothies or respond to stress calmly. The love note of God is that God in the person of Jesus Christ can sit next to us and say, without reservation, same. Same, same, same. Can sit next to us and then, to really push this metaphor for all it's worth, can like my friend Yuan, show up with a proverbial mattress, that we might know that we are loved. Because "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." Thanks be to God. Amen.