

John 1:1-14
Jesus Made His Home Among Us
January 1, 2012 Maple Grove UMC

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John writes: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us." In Greek the word John uses for 'lived' among us means, literally, "pitched a tent." In Jesus God has pitched a tent right next to ours. God's RV has pulled into our campground. God has moved into our neighborhood. God

has come to be with us. “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.”

Our theme this season has been: Home for Christmas. We’ve been asking, “Are you going home for Christmas?” How do you find a spiritual home amidst the changes, the losses, the trouble of life? Well, we said, there’s more than one way to get back home. And with the right faith and attitude, you can be home wherever you are. Home, finally, is where Christ is. So come to Jesus; come and find your heart’s true home in Christ.

But today’s message from John’s gospel is kind of the opposite, or perhaps better, the culmination, of that theme. John says not that we need to come home to Christ, but that Christ has come to make his home with us. “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.” The first move to get home is not ours, but God’s. Neither is being having a spiritual home a matter of meeting God half-way, for in Christ God has come all the way to us, put on our flesh and taken the tent next to ours. We don’t find our own way home; in Christ God has come to make it home right here.

I want to turn that truth over a couple of different ways before we move to the miracle that is Communion. First, can we just sit here for a

moment and be in awe of what this scripture says? The very Word of God, the power present at Creation, took on our flesh. This is the doctrine that theology calls the incarnation, which means literally the enfleshment of God. Here's how it is in the Nicene Cree, which we recited earlier:

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.

That's good, of course, but it's couched in the language of philosophy. It makes it sound like something we're 'supposed to believe,' which of course it is. But how much better than simply to believe it, is being amazed at it, standing in awe of it, being overcome by love for a God like that. We have a God who does not sit in heaven and wait for us to find our way back home; we have a God who in Jesus Christ has brought home here to us. His tent is right next to ours and we have seen his glory. The proper response is not simply to believe that it, but to weep, to laugh, to sing, to let go of all darkness and fear, and be at home in him.

Now here's the other way I want to turn John's truth to the light. Jesus later said to his disciples, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." As Jesus made his home among us, as Christ is God's presence for us, in the same we we are we to make our home among others and be God's presence for them.

For too long we have thought that what it means to be the church is what we do in this building. Church, we think, is what we do for this hour here on Sunday morning, or if we're especially religious, what we do for two hours here on Sunday morning and maybe even another hour here during the week.

And that's good because Jesus was all about gathering people together in his name. But here's the thing: Jesus was even more about sending people out in his name. Jesus never waited for people to come to him; he always went out and found people where they were—in the tax booth, in a boat mending their nets, or even up in a sycamore tree. God, you remember, does not sit back in heaven and wait for people to find their way home. God sent Jesus to make his home here, so we could see his glory right up close.

Even so, I suspect God does not intend for us to sit here in this building and wait for people to show up. A church home is not something

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And in case you think I'm being too aggressive or "evangelical," when Rev. John Kilmer was pastor here in the 1930s, in his very first year he had the Church Board do a door-to-door census of every family in Clintonville and pay personal visits to every new or unchurched resident in the community. That, my friends, is pitching your tent with others, and it worked—membership increased dramatically under his leadership. The Word became flesh and dwelt among the people of this community.

God did not wait for us to find our way home, but came all the way to us. Don't just believe it, my friends, but be in awe--weep, laugh, sing, let go of all your darkness and fear, and be at home in Christ. And don't just believe it, my friends, *be* it for someone, for anyone, who needs home brought to them. The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.

"So did you go home for Christmas?" someone may ask you. And here's what you can say: "No, home came to me." And here's what else you can say: "I took home to someone else." May it be so. Amen.

John 1:1-14
Jesus Made His Home Among Us
January 1, 2012 Maple Grove UMC

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