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January 4, 2009

Text: John 1:1-18

Christmas 2

### THE WORD OF GOD

Did you hear from folks this Christmas season? Can you imagine not hearing from anyone at Christmas time? No cards, no calls, no gifts - nothing? One of the joys of Christmas is hearing from folks.

We are living in what has been called a communications revolution. Can you imagine no telephones, no cell phones, no faxes, no TV, no radio, no internet, no email, no facebook? Without such communication tools it would be much more difficult to stay in touch.

Communication is so vital, so important to us.

Can you imagine no communication from God?

The Bible reading today from the Gospel of John talks about the Word of God and says that "The Word became flesh and lived among us."

God refused to hide in a faraway galaxy. God refused to be out of touch. God refused to give us the silent treatment. God chose to communicate with us! The Word became flesh and lived among us. Imagine! The God of the universe, the God who made it all, chose to come close to us, close enough to touch us, close enough to hold our hands, close enough to whisper in our ears.

"The Word became flesh." *Debar* is Hebrew for "word," and it means both "word" and deed." In the Old Testament, words accomplished something. There was no need for written contracts, a person's word meant that it was good as done. And that certainly was true with God. When God said, "let there be light," there was light! When God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind," that's what happened! There were donkeys and monkeys and snakes and lizards and eagles and bluebirds. A word was not just a sound, it was an action.

"The Word became flesh and lived among us." On Christmas God spoke and a baby was born. On Christmas, the same force of God which brought forth light and living creatures of every kind, lay there in Mary's arms and fed at her breasts. God was speaking. God was at work.

The Word became flesh - and this Word was Life. Life is more than breathing. Life is more than a heartbeat. Life is being connected with God and with others. Life is having a future. Life is having a purpose. Life is joy. Life is hope.

Jesus gives this Life to people. Nicodemus, a religious leader, encountered Jesus and discovered a love and a spirit that was beyond his ability to understand. A woman from Samaria encountered Jesus at a well and discovered in him the Water of Life that satisfied her every thirst. A man who was born blind encountered Jesus who opened his eyes so that he could see not only trees and rocks and hills, but also the life-giving mercy of God.

We have started a brand new year. We are ready to open a new chapter in our lives. It is going to be a good year! I can say that because we have the Word of God. God has chosen to come to us, to come

close to us, to communicate with us, to give us Light and Life. The Word of God has come, full of grace and truth!

As we stand at the beginning of this new year, I want to invite you to do two things. The first invitation involves the Bible. And the second invitation involves your heart.

The Bible brings this Word of God to us. The Bible is like a manger, bearing Christ, the Word of God. The Bible is our Book of Faith. How exciting it will be for you to open the Book of Faith this year and discover the Life that Jesus brings! I invite you to do just that. Whether you are an avid Bible reader, or whether you are just a beginner, I invite you to open the Book of Faith this year like you have never opened it before and receive the Word of God.

Second, I invite you to receive Jesus into your heart and life. Today we heard this Word of God say, "To all who received Christ, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God." This is both an invitation and a promise. The invitation is to receive Jesus, to welcome him into your life and resolve to have a close relationship with him. The promise is that this relationship gives Life and Light. Today as we stand at the threshold of a new year, I invite you to do just that and receive Christ into your heart and life.

Open the Book of Faith and receive Christ into your life. I think that is something we should pray about, because it is all too easy to let this be like all the other New Year's resolutions. Too often in my life I say, "I am going to do that," but I don't get around to doing it. I get sidetracked. Something else grabs my attention. I run out of time or energy. And I don't do it.

So I invite you to join me in prayer right now and welcome Christ into your life. Whether you have done this countless times, or whether this is your first time, I invite you to acknowledge that you want to receive Christ, that you want to believe him and follow him.

If you would like to do that, simply close your eyes and pray with me. "Dear Lord, I want to receive you into my life. I want to be one of your disciples. I want to follow you. I accept your love and the life you bring. Open your Word to me and help me have a closer relationship with you this year. I pray this to you, and in your name, Jesus. Amen."