

## “Make It Last All Year”

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### **John 1:1-14**

*<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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.*

*<sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

One of my family's favorite Christmas movies is “The Muppet Christmas Carol.” It is the traditional Charles Dickens story, but told by the Muppets. It's a lot of fun as well as full of meaning. We watched it again this month, quoting many of our favorite lines as it went along. At the end of the movie and the book – spoiler alert – Ebenezer Scrooge becomes a changed man, treating others with kindness and compassion. In the words of The Christmas Carol, “It was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.” The Muppet version of the story concludes with a great song called “It Feels Like Christmas,” which says

It is the season of the heart  
 A special time of caring  
 The ways of love made clear  
 It is the season of the spirit  
 The message, if we hear it  
 Is make it last all year<sup>1</sup>

I wonder about our ability to “make it last all year.” In our culture’s drawn out Christmas season – starting on or before Halloween – by the time we arrive at Christmas Day, we’re about Christmased out. This month, I received several emails with daily sales counting down the 12 Days of Christmas – ending just before Christmas day, with those retailers forgetting that the 12 Days of Christmas begin *with* Christmas Day and take us up to Epiphany, which is January 6. Christmas is not over. It’s only just begun.

An Episcopal Priest named Michael K. Marsh writes that we often ask each other “How was your Christmas?” Apart from the emphasis that we usually place on answering that question with what presents we received, the question assumes that Christmas is over, done with. It’s now December 27th, and we’ve had the Christmas gatherings – many of us remotely by video chat this year, we’ve unwrapped all of the presents, we’ve figured out what needs to be exchanged, and maybe some of us have taken down the decorations.

Yet, it’s still Christmas – it’s the season of Christmas. Today is not the 1st Sunday *after* Christmas, it’s the 1st Sunday *of* Christmas. In John’s telling of the story of Christmas, it is not an event of the past, but an ongoing action of God’s nature. In the beginning, was the Word – the eternal *logos* – and the Word was with God and was God. And everything was – and is – created

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/The-Muppets/It-Feels-Like-Christmas>

through the Word. Life is created through the Word, and the life is the light of all people. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

2020 has been a very challenging year. There is much metaphorical darkness, and sometimes we may fail to see the light shining in the darkness, but that light was there and *is* there.

The church has been through pandemics before. We’ve heard much about 1918 lately. During the flu pandemic of 1918, like this year, churches and other public gathering places were closed. There’s a story told of a pastor who was sincerely troubled by his inability to reach out to those in need – even more difficult then without the technology we rely on today. He thought about the magnificent stained glass windows in the church he served. The windows faced a major road and so the pastor placed numerous floodlights inside the church, illuminating the windows so that those outside could see them. The windows, with their scenes of Jesus the good shepherd, of Jesus praying in Gethsemane, of Jesus on the cross, of the risen Christ – these windows spoke silent sermons to all who would pass by. Many began to stop and stare at the windows reverently, and were filled with hope and resolve. The light of Christ was shining into the darkness of their lives.

The light of Christ continues to shine. John’s epic prologue is beautiful. For John, the story of Christmas comes down to just one line: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” Or, as *The Message* paraphrase puts it “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.”

The Word – the logos – became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. That is the story of Christmas. The gifts we give each other are an expression of the love of God for each of us, in sending us the greatest gift of all. Those gifts are good as they reflect the light shining in the darkness and the darkness never overcoming it. And yet, they are not to be our focus. Our focus is always on the light coming into the world.

Light is amazing. Just a little bit of light overcomes the darkness. If you enter a dark room with a candle, the darkness does not snuff out the light – the light shines ever more brightly in the dark.

This last week, we had the opportunity to see the Great Conjunction, where Jupiter and Saturn’s orbits aligned such that they could be seen almost touching each other in the evening sky. When we saw those planets nearly looking like stars, it was because they reflect the light of the sun. It’s the same for the moon each night – it reflects the sun’s light. The same is true for us, we are made to reflect the light of the Son of God. And that light can never be overcome.

Christmas is not over. Not in the traditional sense of the 12 Days of Christmas. And not in the sense from the Christmas play that I remember from my childhood, as we sang “365 Days of Christmas Each Year.” We continue to live into the light of Christ moving into the neighborhood.

Pastor Marsh writes “Christmas cannot be limited to an event. Christmas is a life to be lived, a way of being. It means that Christmas is more properly understood as a verb rather than a noun. So maybe we should stop asking, ‘How was your Christmas?’ Instead we should be asking, ‘How are you Christmassing?’ Are you recognizing the Word become flesh in your own life? Are you recognizing the Word become flesh in the lives of others?”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://interruptingthesilence.com/2013/12/30/christmas-on-a-sermon-on-john-11-18/>

Reflect the light of Christ in what you do. The world needs it, always, perhaps especially right now. So, make it last all year. Amen.