

“Not that Way”
Based on John 1:14
Preached on Dec. 25th, 2020

Fellow baptized saints, when I first looked at our Gospel reading for this morning, I didn't know what to do. There are literally hundreds of teachings in these short verses. Many of which hold the deepest theological truth God has given us. John 1 is like a preacher's nightmare and it comes at the busiest time in the church year. I sat in my study staring at my notes wondering, “How am I ever going to make a straightforward Christmas sermon out of this?” And then I realized what the problem is – it's just that simple.

One day God was preparing for a journey to earth. He stood in His walk-in closet scratching His head wondering what He should wear. His heavenly attendant helpfully pulled out a myriad of fancy suits. “Look, this one would be sure to impress everyone,” he said. God shook his head. “Yeah,” He said, “you're right it would. So what else is there.”

The attendant held up the burning bush and dusted it off. “That old one,” God said, “No, its too tight and hot. Besides, this time I want to move around and let people really get to know me.”

“Well there's always this one,” suggested the attendant, who looked quite strange standing there with both arms held out. “I may have all the time there is, but let's not play around,” God said. “But this is your invisible suit,” said the attendant. “No, sorry,” said God, “besides, its dirty.”

Just then the divine tailor rushed into the room with his latest creation. “Your going to love this,” he cried excitedly. “Inspired.” He held up a plain white robe that looked like a Roman toga that was totally covered with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and countless other valuable gemstones. And right across the chest there was a flashing neon sign that said, “I'm God. And I'm here.”

God looked surprised. “Try it on. Try it on,” the tailor said excitedly, as he began to tug at God's clothes. Undressing slowly God noticed a single loose thread in the hem of the new robe and helpfully He tugged it, as only He could. Immediately, all the gemstones, and even the flashing neon sign, fell to the floor with a crash. The tailor also fell to the floor completely distraught. He grabbed at the gemstones, gathering them together, wailing about how his robe was fit for a king. And now may have been destroyed so easily.

Still undressing the Lord apologized for His clumsiness and in an attempt to make His tailor feel better said, “Really, really its fine. I like it. I'll take it with me and wear it everywhere. Look, I'm putting it in my suitcase right now.”

“But now its only a boring robe,” said the tailor, “and what about all these wonderful jewels. What am I going to do with this sign? Look, its still flashing.”

“Tell you what,” God said, “just hang it up over there for a while. No, a bit to the right. Just over Bethlehem there. Yeah. See if you can stick some of the jewels there too. That'll look great.”

Now God who had continued to undress for the fitting was by now completely naked. “Well,” He said, “I'm off.” And He was almost out the door when both the attendant and the tailor smiled at

one another and said, "Haven't you forgotten something?" "No," said God, "its taken quite a few hundred years, but now everything is ready. It's the perfect time."

"But you're naked," said the attendant.

"You're not wearing anything," said the tailor, "you're stark naked, not even a glimmer of all that makes you God."

"Yes," said God.

"But, they'll laugh."

"Yes," said God.

"But they won't take you seriously."

"Yes," said God.

"But, you'll get arrested."

"Yes," said God.

"You're not serious."

"Yes," said God

"But you can't. It's a scandal. Stop Him. You can't go. Not like that."

But He did, didn't He?

Hiding all the outward trappings of His glory and heavenly origins, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came as a baby, born in a barn. And that's exactly the miracle we celebrate at Christmas. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, because He wanted to. And it's hard for us to understand why. Why would He do this for us? Why would He choose to reveal His glory in our nakedness, Sin and Death? Why would He willing make Himself the sacrifice and payment for the Sin of the world?

But He did. Because He wants us to see the glory. The glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. No, its not proud, showy or boastful. It is humble, simple, and gentle – coming to you so that you may have Him.

And so Christmas isn't done, for your Lord continues to come to you in this same scandalous, unassuming way – hidden – offering you the forgiveness that He won for you on the cross. He doesn't come by storm to do this, like a force that manipulates you into His kingdom. But instead He speaks to you simple and clear in the Word of His Gospel. Instead He washes you in water and the Word. Instead He offers Himself to you naked and raw in the humble Supper of His body and blood. Just like in the manger, He lays His hidden glory there for you and asks, "Would you have Me? Would you have the forgiveness I offer?"

And so the story of Christmas continues, every week, as He is mangered in His Holy Supper, as we kneel with the shepherds at the eating place, and the One who hides His glory under bread and wine places His eternal saving presence into our mouths. We enter into Christmas every Sunday, for we first hear the message of the angels preached in the field, and then we come up to His manger's side to kneel

there and eat – this is the liturgy. Our liturgy is Christmas - for our Lord continues to come to us in this scandalous way – and the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven continue to marvel, praise, shout and sing.

God wants to come into your life each day through these means of Word, water, bread and wine, dear one. He does this for you. Not clothed in all His power and divine glory, but still only in His simple, stark naked love. Humble. Receivable. You may long to see and experience the glory, but its only through the marvelous naked love of God that we simple human beings get to discover who God really is. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.