

## “Pup Tents and Tabernacles” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Christmas Day – 2022

- I. **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>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- II. **Christmas is all about options.**
  - a. In his book, “Searching for Christmas,” J.D. Greear says... If you want to buy a food processor, Amazon offers you 2,000 types. Or how about a drill—there are more than 40,000 options. Believe it or not, those numbers are real.
  - b. He goes on to say,
    - i. Choices are wonderful, but also confusing...
    - ii. Choices are empowering, but also overwhelming...
    - iii. And in the West today, it seems as though it’s the same with God.
      1. There is a huge array of deities to choose from, including the “no thank you” option.
      2. Walk through any airport or shopping mall, and you will see people who don’t believe in any god... people who (believe) that there are many different gods... and still others who believe in one god, but who have very different ideas about what that god is or does for them.
        - a. For some, God is kind of a distant grandfather guy, looking down benevolently and wanting us to be happy.
        - b. To others, God is a harsh taskmaster, counting up your good and bad actions and weighing up whether He’s going to have mercy on you in the end.
        - c. To others, God is an impersonal force that wound the universe up and is now off doing other stuff while we get on with it down here.
        - d. To others, God is the universe.
    - iv. There are so many options to choose from when it comes to God, what is the right one?
      1. On the one hand it’s empowering, while on the other hand it’s overwhelming. <sup>1</sup>
  - c. So, with all the “choices” surrounding us, how can we possibly know the right answer?
    - i. First of all, let’s talk about Jesus...
- III. **The Gospel of John begins with a clear message of who Jesus is.**
  - a. Throughout history, people have questioned whether Jesus is truly God and truly man... but John is clear – “the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:1, 14)

- i. In our reading in Hebrews, it says that God created the world through Jesus (vs 3) and God the Father says to Jesus, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” (vs 8)
  - ii. Colossians 2:9 says, “For in [Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”
- b. I could go on and on about the ways and places that Jesus is God in Scripture, and I have a long list of these references if anyone wants a copy let me know...
- c. The point is, many people consider Jesus to be a good teacher, a great philosopher, a good guy, or even a special person created by the Father to rescue us...
  - i. But Jesus is not created... He is God from eternity... as it says in John today – “in the beginning” – or from the foundation of all things, Jesus, the Word was there.
  - ii. Just as it says in Colossians 1, “For by [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth.” (vs 16)
  - iii. And so, the Bible clearly tells us that Jesus is God... the Father is God... and the Holy Spirit is God – a mystery to be sure – but the truth nonetheless.
- d. You are probably thinking to yourself, “Why does Pr Jim have to get all theological on me? I just want to enjoy the baby Jesus and drink some eggnog for goodness’ sake!”
  - i. The reason we need to be clear about who God is comes from the constant “choices” out there to pick a god of our choosing.
  - ii. Today it’s like going to a grocery store and picking different products off the shelf – as we use all these concepts and ideas from the world to choose a god that works for us rather than the other way around.
- e. I know this might sound strange to many, but we don’t “choose” God – instead, He chooses us.
  - i. Jesus says in John 15:16, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.”
  - ii. The Bible tells us that we have no power to choose God, but we are spiritually dead and helpless because of the sin we all inherited from Adam and Eve. (see Ephesians 2:1-9)
  - iii. Therefore, God in His great power and mercy sent God the Son to give us a Savior.
    - 1. Jesus was born as a human being – both God and man – in order to bring us forgiveness through the cross.

IV. **The meaning of Christmas is God who dwelt among us.**

- a. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (vs 14)
- b. “Dwelt” is actually based on the word, “tent” or “tabernacle”.
  - i. You might remember, in the Old Testament the tabernacle was the tent they set up before they built a temple to worship God.

- ii. Back then, God’s presence was right there in that tabernacle, as the ancient Israelites set up the tent around the Ark of the Covenant.
- c. John tells us today that Jesus, God Himself, became flesh and “tabernacled” or dwelt among us.
  - i. The clear reference is that Jesus became the presence of God among us – and that is why Isaiah says that Jesus is Immanuel, which means, “God with us.” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)
- d. The reality of God coming to be with us was not a massive tabernacle – but more like a pup tent.
  - i. He came in the form of a little baby, born in the lowliest of conditions – a dirty animal stable far away from home and family.
  - ii. He grew up in a blue-collar family and had no wealth.
  - iii. He spent His life on the outside of religious leadership and power.
  - iv. He was subjected to ridicule, false accusations, and criminal charges – and ultimately nailed to a cross.
    - 1. No glory, no fanfare, just a criminal’s death – like all the others.... So it seemed...
    - 2. But we know the whole story – that Jesus is man and God....
      - a. Jesus the man lived a perfect life without sin (so He could be a sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish)
      - b. Jesus had to be God so that the payment was sufficient – in other words, all the sins of the world – including ours could only be paid for by God.
- e. And to think, God chooses you... God loves you... God forgives you...

V. **The Word, God in the flesh, is not a choice.**

- a. We are spiritually dead in our trespasses until our eyes are opened and we are brought to life by His power.
  - i. God is with us and reveals Himself to us through the Bible.
  - ii. God has chosen us by the power of the Holy Spirit – coming to us in His Word by Baptism and faith...
  - iii. And this faith we have was the work of God in our lives to open our hearts to the truth... which there is only one truth not many... but the truth of our salvation – Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- b. Praise be to God on this most holy day of Christmas – as we celebrate our Jesus – the one who dwelt among us. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Source: J. D. Greear, Searching For Christmas (The Good Book Company, 2020), pp. 23-24, 27