

John 1:1-14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.

³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NIV84)

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, grant that the birth of your one and only Son in the flesh may set us free from our old bondage under the yoke of sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law. Alleluia. (Galatians 4:4,5a)

Sermon Text:

Broken! It was the thought that grasped the little boy by the heart as he stared at the window through which the ball had made its fateful voyage. There was really no way to get out of it. Mom would know soon. He'd heard her question from inside as the glass shattered. Soon she'd know the answer even as she saw the cause looking back through the broken glass.

Broken! It took his breath away as he saw the text messages that let him know his marriage was shattered. It stole any meaningful answer she could have given as she rounded the corner and saw the face covered in pain and disbelief by what had been learned.

Broken! It's what he thought of himself as he watched them go in and out of the stores carrying their packages and wearing their smiles, all the while knowing he would need to begin looking for the next place to try and stay warm tonight, knowing that while his addictions had not left him dead, this feeling wasn't far from it.

Broken! It's the feeling that grips every human being at some point in time as we labor in a world overcome by our sin and the consequences of them. Perhaps it's not in shattered window panes, devastated marriages or crushed dreams but in the loss of a loved one, struggles with some

illness, or the depression which seizes one who is acutely aware of their own shortcomings. It's always there.

Broken may not have been the word which dwelt in John's heart as he wrote the words inspired by God but He accurately describes it anyway. ¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was with God in the beginning.* ³ *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.* ⁴ *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

Every Christmas we hear of it, a world that can't quite grasp what this day is all about. Despair and depression are heightened as we watch others that seemingly have everything that we are scrapping to possess. People everyday are laboring in the darkness, struggling to see the light.

Have you been there, looking for light in the darkness, trying to be made whole in the brokenness? Maybe if we put forth the right amount of effort or assemble the right amount of resources. We think, "I just need to get my life together. I need to be more committed, be a better spouse, get the right kind of attention, recognition, I just need another chance." The solution always seems to be "try harder". So we say "great" when asked how we are and life is falling apart. We post about our fabulous life on Facebook when we're frazzled just trying to hold it all together. If we just keep putting one foot in front of the other it has to all turn around, right?

But it's not the solution. It does no more good than if our kid runs as fast as he can away from the shattered window, if the spouse tries to ignore the unfaithfulness, or if the addict just moves day to day without acknowledging the real problem behind all the dysfunction. When we try to fix it, when we just try to get away from the brokenness, the darkness, we simply find ourselves in a different place with the same problems.

So how do we break the brokenness? I know what you're thinking, "This is where he says Jesus or church." But then that might not seem so satisfying. Maybe you're here in Church for the first time today, maybe for the first time in a long time and you think to yourself is that Church, Christianity is supposed to make people good. It's supposed to fix them. But you know Christians who are every bit as messed up as you are so we're all just a bunch of hypocrites. While you know that you are broken, you begin to wonder just how many of these folks really know just how broken they are. They seem to be stumbling in the dark just as much as you are.

Or maybe you've been here your whole life. The problem Satan has been tempting you with is that you don't always have the answers, aren't always whole. Why aren't you always kinder, always more faithful than the other guy? Why do you struggle with sin, with life? Maybe you begin to wonder if people only knew how broken you really were, then they would call you a fraud.

Whether you're a member of the first group, the second or some combination of them, You still feel like your stumbling in the darkness. The truth is that we are. We're constantly at war with a flawed idea of Christ, a fundamental misunderstanding of Christianity. We think God loves the good and if life is tough then it's because we don't fit. We're broken.

But the truth is that God didn't come for those who were already perfect. In fact, if we think about what John says here even when Jesus was teaching and preaching, darkness was a regular part of the human existence. The truth is that's why Jesus came. He comes for those broken by sin and lost in darkness. That's what Christianity and Christmas is really about.

When we were broken, stumbling in our arrogance, our lies, our brokenness, God took on flesh for us. Listen again, ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.* ¹¹ *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.* ¹² *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—* ¹³ *children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

This is why the angels broke into chorus that first Christmas night. While we couldn't get out of our brokenness, God became one of us. Not so that He could get a better lay of the land or to give us the right material to work our way out of a jam, but to do it for us. Faith realizes it's not our ancestry, decision, will or work, but God's.

He does it all. He lives perfectly in our place so that God no longer sees broken people but those made whole in the saving waters of Baptism. He no longer sees us through the broken windowpane of our sinfulness but through the light of His forgiveness won on a cross. He doesn't see us wondering where we'll stay worn in the frightful night of sin because He comes to us and feeds us in His supper, and promises an eternal shelter in the heaven. None of this is because we were broken less than someone else. None of it is because we fixed it when no one else could. It's all because God loved us enough to send His Son, who took on flesh and lived for us, died for us, rose for us and it all starts in the manger in Bethlehem where light, where peace, where Christ is born.

This Christmas, when you feel broken, remember. Peace doesn't come from trying to hold together the broken pieces. Peace comes from a God who loves the broken, who made the long journey to rescue us, and who promises to transform you from guilt to glory, from broken to beautiful, from wrecked to redeemed. Then we'll see the real reason to celebrate because *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Amen.