

**Discovering the Power of the Incarnation**  
**Sermon 1—“We’ve been included”**

Passages: 1 John 1:1-4  
 John 1:14-18

**Christmas is coming...and that idea gets most of us pretty excited!**

Of course, as Christians, we love Christmas *not only* because it means the joy of giving and receiving presents, having time with family and getting a break from work. We love Christmas *because* we recognise the importance of the incredibly awesome event that took place 2000 years ago, on that first Christmas morning. As Christians, we recognise how hugely significant was the birth of Jesus Christ!

We’re going to hand out scraps of paper and pencils. I want you to write down as many reasons as you can think of as to **why the birth of Jesus is important to you**. (Slide: “Why is the birth of Jesus important to you?”)

Now, I want you to hold onto your paper for the next ten weeks as we work our way through the 5 chapters of John’s First Epistle to see how your understanding of the Incarnation measures up to that of the Apostle. For, you see, John wrote this first letter with this very question in mind. In fact, the coming of Jesus in human flesh (his ‘incarnation’) was such an important doctrine for John that he stoutly condemns anyone who would deny it as being animated by “*the spirit of the anti-christ*”!

Listen to 1 John 4:2-3 <sup>2</sup> ***This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.***

So, back to the question—Why is the birth of Jesus so important to John?

Well, John’s first answer to that question is found in verses 1 to 4 of chapter 1.

Indeed, the way in which John has constructed these verses gives the impression of a staircase, with steps that descend from heaven to earth.

**<sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning  
which we have heard,  
which we have seen with our eyes,  
which we have looked at  
and our hands have touched –  
this we proclaim concerning the Word of  
life.**

**<sup>2</sup> The life appeared;  
we have seen it and testify to it,  
and we proclaim to you the eternal life,**

**which was with the Father  
and has appeared to us.**

**<sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard...**

The linguistic movement in these verses is quite beautiful!

And, if you'll notice, it tells us that it is always God who moves towards us, not us towards Him!

**He moves:** from heaven to earth;

from eternity into time;

from Omnipresence into localisation;

from Omniscience into limited knowledge;

from Omnipotence into weakness (and even suffering).

As Paul confirms in Philippians 2, it was Jesus who "**emptied Himself**" – he laid aside the powers and prerogatives of being God in order to come into our world as one of us. By doing so, he endorsed our fleshly existence in an astonishingly intimate way.

But, you know, we still haven't answered the question of "why"? Why would the Eternal God do such a seemingly "silly thing" and become one of us? What would be the point of such an audacious undertaking?

Back in March of 1995, a country singer by the name of Joan Osborne rocketed into pop music fame by asking that very question: “*What if God was one of us; just a slob like one of us...?*” (Have a listen!)

Why would God become one of us? Well, John finally gives us an answer to this question in verse 3. God became flesh “***...so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.***”

The key word here is “***fellowship***”! Now, according to the Oxford Dictionary, fellowship can be defined as “companionship”, “participation”, or “sharing in community.” And John certainly has these ideas in mind. But John is certainly saying far more than this. The Greek word he uses here is “***koinonia***”—a word which the philosophers of John’s day used when describing the closest union... the bonds of brotherhood... between men.

Jesus became one of us in order that the closest bonds of humanity...our essential brotherhood and sisterhood as fellow creatures under God... might be restored. He became one of us, not simply to share in our humanity (and a fallen one at that!) but to bring us back to the way we were originally created to be—human beings who live in face-to-face communion with each other **and** with God! In other words, Jesus came to restore **koinonia** on this earth!

And that’s why John deliberately introduces us to **the Trinity**. For the truth is that all **koinonia** on earth originates in the eternal **koinonia** of the Trinity! Without this eternal “fellowship” inside the Trinity, there could be no **koinonia** between human beings!

It might help if I lay all this out for you in five chronological points:

1. **Eternity**-- Before the world was made, God existed as a relational being; a God of face-to-face communion. Between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed a relationship of openness, love and acceptance; a relationship of togetherness and oneness; of unity in diversity. That is ***Koinonia!***
2. **Creation**-- It was for this reason that the universe was created! From the depth of *fellowship* in God came a yearning to express itself outwards

towards others. And so, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit opened up the circle of their own fellowship and created the universe! What this means is that this desire for fellowship is printed on the DNA of the universe! In fact, the original creation literally overflowed with this **koinonia** as every relationship (whether between God and humanity, or between humanity and the rest of the created order) experienced the beauty of face-to-face communion. **Koinonia!**

3. **The Fall**-- When sin entered the world, however, this perfect fellowship was immediately undermined and broken. People began to hide themselves from God and from each other. Discord, jealousy, anger and resentment destroyed relationships. **Koinonia** became but a distant memory!
4. **Incarnation**-- What John is saying, here, is that God has done something to reverse this trend! Out of the eternal fellowship of the Trinity has come Someone who knows true fellowship and who has the power to restore it to the people of this earth! Hence, the Incarnation of Christ! Regardless of the depth of discord and the universal breakdown of social harmony, **Christ has come to restore koinonia to this earth!**
5. **Gospel Contagion**—Now, one person at a time, koinonia spreads over the earth. As one person comes in contact with Jesus, the Eternal Life of the Trinity infects that person to become a carrier of this “Gospel contagion”, gradually bringing **koinonia** to every place on earth. (As you see and hear the Gospel, you turn to another who hasn’t and declare to them the wonders of this man named Jesus. Those who know you are then introduced into fellowship of Jesus, who introduces us to the Father and the Holy Spirit.)

In her popular song, Joan Osborn asked a very important question; **“What if God was one of us?”** The Apostle John has given her the answer! If God was one of us, He wouldn’t be just another *“stranger on a bus trying to find his way home”*. Rather, He’d be **bringing us all back home**-- back home to the fellowship we once had when the world was first created. **Koinonia!**

It’s no wonder, then, why John concludes this first paragraph of his letter with these words: **“We write this to make our joy complete!”** Joy is the by-product

of true fellowship! And only Jesus has the power to bring us back into the joy of the original fellowship—true, deep, open, face-to-face communion between human beings and with God—that we were intended to have from the beginning of Creation! By coming to earth 2000 years ago, Jesus has included us in the **koinonia** of eternity.

That's the first reason of many reasons that we'll be examining in this new sermon series as to why the birth of Jesus is so important!

Let's pray.