

## WHAT'S IN A WORD?

**Psalm 98**

**John 1:1-5 (Read during sermon)**

**Faith Community  
December 25, 2005**

### Introduction

The author of the Gospel according to John is a poet. He tells the gospel story in a completely different way. There is no Bethlehem, innkeeper, shepherds, or visiting wise men from the East. As far as we know, John knows nothing of a virgin birth. Actually, Mary and Joseph don't even appear in his story.

Instead, John's Christmas story is a hymn; it's poetry. In Greek his words can be sung as well as spoken. Listen to John's account of the Christmas event.

**(Read John 1:1-5)**

### I

Isn't it strange? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Have you ever wondered why he chose Word as a metaphor for Jesus?

What's in a word? Not much. Talk is cheap. Words are a dime a dozen. Talk is easy; action is what is tough.

Why did John choose Word to represent Jesus Christ? It's not something powerful like lightning. Lightning can split a century-old oak tree right down the middle. Why didn't he say, "In the beginning was the lightning?" Make it dynamic!

But a word? Words are cheap. Talk is easy.

### II

Words don't mean much, do they? We've all heard promises made but not lived up to. The account is long overdue and a representative calls, "Mr. Jones, your account is now ninety days in arrears. We would like to work out some payment plan so we can clear this up."

"Oh, don't worry. I just paid the whole thing off. The check is in the mail."

A smile comes over the caller's face. She knows she'll have to call again next month. Talk is cheap.

A teenager comes home from school, gets on the phone, stretches out on the floor, and talks for the rest of the afternoon to the friend she just spent all day with at school. It's just talk.

### III

Of course, words can hurt sometimes, but they are just words. A black student, one of only a handful of minority students at a school with thousands of white kids, overhears a racial slur and it really hurts. But they're only words, aren't they? "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Haven't we all said that?

A young boy grows up with an angry, discontent father who hurls his own inadequacy at his son, “Stupid boy, will never amount to anything.” “Worthless kid can’t do one thing right.” “Lazy oaf.” “Nerd.” They’re only words. What’s in a word?

A word is a harmless thing, isn’t it?

Or is it?

Should the saying instead go, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but they will surely mend. Words and slurs won’t break my bones, but the hurt might never end?”

#### IV

A word can heal. Just a simple word can make a difference. A word like “thanks.” Or words like “I will never forget what you have done for me.” Or, “You were there when I really needed you; I just wanted to tell you how much that means to me.”

Or the three little, insignificant words of one syllable each, “Sure you can.”

Words don’t seem like much. You can’t see them. We don’t unwrap them on Christmas morning. And yet, some words we wouldn’t trade for everything we got for Christmas!

What’s in a word? They seem so insignificant, but words can turn your life around. Like when you ask someone, “Can you forgive me, and can we start over again?” The answer finally comes, “Yes.” That’s a word that changes your world.

What’s in a word? Only the power of life, like when you hear those three little words of one syllable each, “I love you.”

#### V

The truth is, sometimes words are so powerful we have trouble getting them out. If talk is so cheap, why can’t we talk more often?

“I’m so angry at him I don’t know what to do!”

“Well, have you talked with him about this? What does he say?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t talked with him. I guess I’m afraid.”

“Have you told your daughter how proud you are of her?”

“Why don’t you sit down with your wife and tell her how you feel?”

“Oh, I’m going to. I’m just waiting for the right time.”

“In three years the right time hasn’t come up?”

Just words! They are only words. If words are so insignificant, why do we sometimes choke them back?

#### Conclusion

John tells us that God sent his Word into the world. What else would hold the power of a word? Not even lightning holds the power of some words. Lightning has the power to bring ruin and destruction; but a word has the power begin life all over again.

God sent his Word into the world, not with a crash of thunder, not with blaring neon lights, but in a tiny, squirming, prune-faced baby. That one was the Word.

The Word came to us with the power of life. “I love you...I forgive you...I want you...I am sending you.” Think of the power in those two simple, one syllable words, “I do”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Amen