

**Bruton Parish Church
Christmas Day – Feast of the Incarnation
December 25, 2011
The Reverend Charles A. Robinson**

Blessed be the Name of God†

Word and life and light, grace and truth – The Creator of all things became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory!

Earlier this week, a friend and classmate of mine posted on Facebook™ a question for consideration in writing sermons for the celebrations of this weekend. Her question was: “What is the primary difference between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day?” Many people offered responses to the question. The responses ranged from a message for children vs. a message for adults to anticipation vs. hope to different audiences (no one would possibly attend both days) to even a snide suggestion that my friend was trying to get someone else to write her sermons. To my surprise none of the responders actually addressed any difference between the two days. I did not respond on Facebook.™ However, I have been living with the question for a few days and I want to reflect this morning on a clear distinction between the Gospel truth of last night and today.

The proclamatory and prophetic promises of the Nativity are profound and beautiful, ushering in for us the truth of our faith that God is with us – Emmanuel. The characters in the narrative all communicate with God in specific ways to fulfill their part in the story. We have been brought to and through the birth.

Today begins the Incarnation - the real presence of God amongst us. The center of our faith, that which is unique to it. God has entered humanity in a real and tangible way.

For the world at large, Christmas is pretty much over. Tomorrow it’s year-end close out and moving on to New Year celebrations and in this coming year full on political primaries and caucuses. No time to ponder the power of this feast. But, for those who follow Christ, the stage is set for the powerful claims of our faith and everything begins.

The Word became flesh and lived among us with all of the implications that entails. The very creative power of all things walks the road of life – comfort and pain, joy and agony, laughter and tears, life and death. God experiences humanity completely in love, compassion, mercy, as well as rejection and betrayal.

The claims we make for this Incarnation are unique to the Christian faith. God is not inaccessible and distant, but present and engaged with the life of humanity. This is the shape and substance of what we believe. Jesus Christ moves forth from

this place and becomes our Redeemer. Having walked with us and amongst us, God is merciful and approachable.

Beginning now and for the next 100 days, we will retrace the steps of this life given to us and for us. In times to come of discovery, repentance, reflection, and restoration, we will be reminded of the tangible way of life and our salvation story.

When John writes that the Word became flesh and lived among us he uses a word that means literally “pitched a tent or tabernacle with us” and came to reside with us.¹ This is more than a visitation to a distant land and it is more than an isolated event. God desires to be with us, to abide with us, to participate in our experience of life – that of all humanity for all time. Creation is altered and the Creator has stepped out of metaphor and into tangible reality; out of the abstract and into relationship as in a household and that familial tent covers us throughout the rest of the story.²

Your presence here this morning fills me with confidence to urge you not to miss any stage of the drama on which we embark today. I invite and encourage you to take this Incarnation forward with you into these coming seasons and view all that we are to do through our truth that the Kingdom of God and God’s self really dwell with us and cover us with mercy and love as we are transformed for God’s sake.

Word and life and light, grace and truth – The Creator of all things became flesh and lives among us, and we see his glory.

Happy Christmas! Blessed be the name of God†

1

Friberg

ἐσκήνωσεν verb indicative aorist active 3rd person singular from σκηνώω

[Fri] σκηνώω fut. σκηνώσω; 1aor. ἐσκήνωσα; *live, dwell (temporarily); literally live or camp in a tent; figuratively in the NT dwell, take up one's residence, come to reside (among) (JN 1.14)*

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σκηνώω, σκήνω; future σκηνώσω; 1 aorist σκηνωσα; "to fix one's tabernacle, have one's tabernacle, abide (or live) in a tabernacle (or tent), tabernacle" (often in Xenophon; Demosthenes, p. 1257, 6); God σκηνώσει ἐπ' αὐτούς, *will spread his tabernacle over them*, so that they may dwell in safety and security under its cover and protection, [Rev. 7:15](#); universally, equivalent to *to dwell* ([Judg. 5:17](#)): followed by ἐν with a dative of place, [Rev. 12:12](#); [13:6](#) (ἐν ταῖς οἰκίαις, Xenophon, an. 5, 5, 11); ἐν ἡμῖν, among us, [John 1:14](#); μετὰ τίνος, with one, [Rev. 21:3](#); σύν τίνι, to be one's tent-mate, Xenophon, Cyril 6, 1, 49. (Compare: ἐπισκηνώω, κατασκηνώω.)

² Developed from an idea found @ <http://www.ekkesiaproject.org/blog/2011/12/the-logic-of-the-incarnation/> Author – Debra Dean Murphy.

