

**Bruton Parish Church
December 27, 2009
First Sunday after Christmas
The Reverend Charles A. Robinson**

Blessed be the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

Be born in us, Emmanuel! With these words, we ushered in Christmas on Thursday night. For the next two weeks, we reflect upon God come amongst us, sharing in our humanity, in the day-to-day stuff of life.

Today we look at this Emmanuel, God with us through the powerful, poetic, and mysterious introductory words of the Gospel of John.

Hear some of these words from the Revised English Bible:

“In the beginning the Word already was. The Word was in God’s presence, and what God was, the Word was. He was with God at the beginning, and through Him all things came to be; without Him no created thing came into being. In Him was life and that life was the light of (hu) mankind, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never mastered it.” And later in the Gospel reading – “...the Word became flesh; He made his Home among us, and we saw His glory, such glory as befits the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1: 1-5, 14).

The Gospel of John is the last of the accounts of Jesus to be written and among the very latest of the New Testament books.

The oldest Gospel, Mark begins with prophetic words from Isaiah; Matthew opens with genealogy and Luke with angelic visitation and pronouncement.

John borrows from the developed theologies within the communities of Christ and places Jesus, the Christ at the beginning of all things – the very Word that spoke all things into being.

The Greek word that translates “the word” is logos. This word represents concepts known to both the Jewish and Greek worlds.

These are the people that make up the early Christian Church by this time. The earliest Christians are Jews and the Gospel has spread rapidly in the Greek world. To the Jews, logos is an appropriate word to describe and to substitute for his unspoken name. In Greek philosophy, logos is the force that holds together and controls the unstable and unpredictable world. Philo, who was a Greek Jew, combined Greek and Jewish thought, and used logos to describe God’s creative role. The writer of John says to all of the people in his world – “you believe in *logos*, Jesus is *logos* come to earth. Jesus is the mind of God in human form”

In Greek, the feminine equivalent of the word, logos is the word sophia, which we translate as wisdom. It also means insight and intelligence.

This is a fact that will come as no surprise to most of us today – men carry the words and women carry the wisdom.

Nevertheless, the word is also used throughout Scripture to describe the creative act of God. Proverbs 3:19 proclaims that the Lord founded the Earth (and all in it or humankind) by wisdom. Psalm 104 declares that, in wisdom, the Lord has made all the works of creation.

The apocryphal wisdom scriptures are full of references to sophia and its relationship to all that is created. Included in these scriptures is a story of God granting permission for wisdom to dwell in the Earth. Wherever the concepts of wisdom or sophia occur in the scriptures they are represented as feminine and referred to with feminine pronouns. Conversely, wherever the word or logos occurs it is represented with masculine pronouns.

So, logos and sophia are two aspects of the same characteristic of God dwelling amongst us and in us. Logos, the word of spoken creation is represented in a masculine form. Sophia, the wisdom of creation is in feminine form. This is a metaphor for life in relationship with God – word and wisdom – proclamation and insight. This is the coming of Christ with us. The instruments of creation married and made perfect in Christ. Paul writes in a portion of letter of Galatians that was not included in our reading today, “²⁶ For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ and if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3: 26-29). In this letter written a generation before the Gospel is the promise of Baptismal Covenant, the hope of the Gospel in Christ - that we come together without divisions around ethnicity, social status, or gender.

Now, it is common in our time for Christians to treat the scriptures that have been inspired and given to us for our edification as the ultimate and final Word of God. This can become so profound as to become a form of idolatry known as biblolatry. This is not appropriate because John tells us that the Word came to live among us – to bring grace and truth. It is, says the Gospel, Christ making God known because he is close to the very heart of God.

The word and the wisdom of creation has come not just to walk with us, but also to be born in us, to dwell and abide with us. We find the proclamation – the Word of God, and the wisdom or insight to understand it and apply it in our lives. This is the light or illumination in the darkness. The darkness has not and cannot overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, has come into the world. We have a promise that this enlightenment can be born in us.

It is our Anglican theology that we receive the grace and truth of God through Christ in the scripture, developed through tradition and tempered with our reason. All of these are gifts to us from God at Christmas. Christ has come as the logos, the Word and proclamation; Christ has come as the sophia, wisdom and illumination. Christ has come in the flesh, in life – the light of the people.

Shine forth in our lives, living Christ and give us the promise of John – from your fullness grant us grace upon grace, kindness upon kindness, mercy upon mercy, goodwill upon goodwill, that we may live in unity without arbitrary divisions of our own creation.

**Be born in us, Emmanuel!
Word and Wisdom made flesh!**

Blessed be the name of God.