

John 1:1-14 (NIV – 1984)

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

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

¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴The 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.

Dear children of the heavenly Light,

As you listen to the Christmas music stations today, you're likely to hear a song that asks a very simple question, "Where are you Christmas?" A little girl named Cindy Lou Who asked this question in the movie, *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*. Cindy Lou lived in Whoville where all the citizens were obsessed with Christmas or so they thought as they got caught up in all the shopping and decorating and festivities of Christmas. Cindy Lou, though, wasn't excited about the shopping and the wrapping and the decorating and the partying. So she sings this song, *"Where are you Christmas? Why can't I find you? Why have you gone away? Where is the laughter you used to bring me? Why can't I hear music play? My world is changing. I'm rearranging. Does that mean Christmas changes too?"*

Many of us may have experienced a similar feeling during the holidays. How many of us have asked, "Christmas just doesn't seem the same since (you fill in the blank)?" As the world around us gets all frenzied and excited about the "stuff" of Christmas—the cards and presents, the music and decorations—for one reason or another we feel like Cindy Lou and wonder "Where are you Christmas?" Loved ones move away or move on to heavenly glory. Life changes as jobs change, friends change, health changes, and families change. When life changes, it seems Christmas changes too—and we get discouraged as all the "stuff" of Christmas seems unimportant. "Where are you Christmas?" We could go searching and searching for answers, but it's not that hard. You see, the apostle John gives us the answer right here in the first fourteen verses of his book where he answers that important question,

Sermon Theme: Where Are You Christmas?

- 1. In Jesus' Humble Birth**
- 2. In Jesus' Perfect Life**
- 3. In Jesus' Death and Resurrection**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” At this time of year most people decorate their homes for the holidays. Some go all out, but we don’t find Christmas in the decorations. Instead we first find Christmas in an unlikely place—at creation. You see, Jesus was there. Through him, God created a perfectly beautiful creation filled with life untainted by sin or death or decay or corruption. Through Christ, God created and decorated a perfect creation for his most special creation—people. God made it so perfectly beautiful that life had become a perfect “Christmas” celebration as God and man lived in holy harmony.

Sadly it didn’t last. God had given our first parents only one command to serve and obey him, but they disobeyed him as they fell prey to Satan’s temptation. With their disobedience came all the heartache and depression and grief and sorrow and frustration and hurt and illness and death we endure today. Our first parents ruined that perfect Christmas celebration and ruined ours too, but Jesus was there—giving real hope with a promise and a plan to crush the Tempter’s power to restore what was ruined.

“In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” Amidst all the decorations, you can’t help, but notice all the twinkling lights. They come in every shape and size and color, but no matter how impressive the display, we won’t find Christmas in the lights. No, we find Christmas in the Light.

When Adam and Eve fell into sin they filled our world with spiritually blinding darkness. In that darkness every one of us gropes about blindly looking for help as we stumble toward the eternal darkness of hell. So what shatters darkness better than light? In fact, the same is true of the Light of whom Isaiah the prophet writes, **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”** That one true Light was so important that the Lord sent a messenger named John the Baptist ahead to prepare the way, because the **“true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”**

So where do we find the One who gives real hope to Christmas? Where do we find the One who is the true Light of Christmas (and really the reason for all our twinkling lights!)? Where do we find Christmas? **“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.”** We find Christmas in the Word made flesh!

We find Christmas in a manger—a feeding trough in a lowly stable! There in that manger we see God himself in human flesh. On a bed of straw we have the fulfillment of all the prophecies to our first parents and countless generations after them. We have the Word who makes his home among us. We have God taking on our humanity, becoming a servant to save us from our foolishness of sin. It defies all of human reason why God’s Anointed would leave the glories and comforts of heaven to put himself into the sinful squalor of our existence. Yet there he lay on that first Christmas night ready to take on everything we have ever faced.

Adversity? From conception he was an outcast. Need? He was born into poverty. Peer Pressure? He faced the constant attack of temptation even from his friends. Sorrow? The world around him and the people to whom he was sent rejected him. Grief? He wept at the grave of a friend and over the sin of

Jerusalem. Suffering? He endured the anguish of being forsaken by his heavenly Father. Death? He gave up his spirit too. In the manger we see God's love in the flesh. There we see Christmas.

We find Christmas, then, in the perfect life of the Savior, our Substitute, as he pours out his grace and mercy on countless souls by healing the blind, the deaf, the mute, the paralyzed and the leper, by casting out demons and raising the dead and feeding thousands. We see all this grace as he proclaims his truth into the hearts of his hearers, both back then and now through his Word. His light shattered the darkness of the hearts of the people around him and it shatters our darkness too. It still shatters sin's darkness as he works through our proclamation of the good news of his forgiveness.

We then find Christmas at an unlikely place—on a cross. At Christmas we don't often think about the anguish and pain and tears of Good Friday, but Jesus came to deal with our pain and our sorrow and our grief and our hurt. When Jesus was barely a week old, old Simeon told his mother Mary, **“a sword will pierce your heart too...”** A time would come when Mary would see her Son bruised and bloody and beaten, while hanging on a cross with nails piercing his hands and feet. Yes, her Son was suffering, but more importantly, God was giving up his Son so we could be his sons and daughters through faith in this Savior, who sacrificed himself for us. **“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”**

On Good Friday, we find Christmas, but if not for Easter, there would be no Christmas. In the empty tomb we find Christmas. We find the joy of the resurrection that makes all our Christmas celebrations a reality. We find the joy of Christ's eternal victory over death. We find the joy of knowing heaven is ours and hell will not prevail. There in the empty tomb we find that the Word made flesh has delivered us from the death we deserve.

So we find Christmas in all these places as we discover hope, light, love and joy in Christ, but there is one more place where we find Christmas—heaven. There we will join in the eternal celebration of Christmas and rejoice with all those in heaven, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, who died in faith and who now live before the throne of God and praise him each day in his temple. One day we will find Christmas there in all its holy glory and beauty.

So where are you Christmas? At the end of the song, Cindy Lou realizes Christmas really hasn't changed after all. It's really been there all the time. As Christ pushes aside all that has discouraged our Christmas celebrations, we realize that no matter what happens in our lives Christmas has not changed and will not change because we find Christmas in Christ. May the Lord allow us to always find Christmas in Christ too! Amen.