



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25, 2025

ISAIAH 52:7-10; PSALM 98; HEBREWS 1:1-12; JOHN 1:1-14

## CHRISTMAS CAME INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

***John 1:1-14** [In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.]*

Many Episcopalians – until very recently myself included – celebrate Christmas in church on Christmas Eve, leaving Christmas morning, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, to the true church stalwarts.

Well, here you are!

Perhaps you're a Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning sort of person, but either way, here you are.

I want to know, what has brought you to church today?

Why are you here on this morning?

Today our liturgical calendar, after weeks of Advent anticipation, gifts us with a magnificent sense of occasion – a moment to pause, take stock, and receive the gift of Christmas right here, right now, in all its fullness.

No more waiting, no more anticipating,  
no more vigilant watch-keeping.

The gift that we've been waiting for is  
born anew today, and we've been  
invited to come and see.

Today is the day for which we've  
yearned with aching hearts: O Come,  
we cried, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!  
Of all the prophetic metaphors for  
Christ, today, more than any other, is  
Christ Emmanuel, which means, God  
with us.

God-in-Christ is with us always, of  
course, but today the church helps us  
make present this magnificent reality,  
in the same way that Advent renewed  
our longing for it.

Our Christmas feast brings Christ into  
focus, into fullness, into friendship.  
Christ with us. Jesus, God's Christmas  
gift of love incarnate to the world is  
right here, right now at a person-to-  
person level right by your side and  
mine.

So, how did we get from the cosmic  
scope of our nativity story this morning  
to the personal, the relatable, the God  
with us? Baby Jesus born in Bethlehem  
is not the origin story that has captured  
John the Evangelist's imagination so  
much as the Christ through whom and  
with whom God created the beginning  
of beginnings.

I was recently given my mother's Bible,  
which surprised me with the daunting  
revelation that she has notes and  
underlining on virtually every page.

I haven't done a close read of even half  
the scripture she has, and here I am a  
priest of the church! So, respect, mom,  
and thank you for continuing to be my  
teacher in reading and studying the  
Bible.

At the top of the page containing John's  
Prologue, in her immaculate third-  
grade teacher's handwriting, my mom  
has written, "Word = Jesus."

She's right, of course.

In that simple equation, she has  
captured what is both cosmic and  
intimate about John's story of the  
greatest of all beginnings. On  
Christmas, we know that "The Word  
became flesh and lived among us."<sup>1</sup>

The Greek word conveying this idea  
that God's Word *lived* among us has a  
deeper, far more specific resonance. It  
literally describes God's action as  
"pitching a tent," or "tabernacling" in  
our midst.

Eugene Peterson's translation in *The  
Message* better narrates this idea with,  
"The Word became flesh and blood, and  
moved into the neighborhood."

This morning, once again, and with a  
promise for eternity, Jesus moved into

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:14 (NRSV)

the neighborhood. Our neighborhood.  
Your neighborhood, and mine.

Isaiah helps us imagine the person of Christ coming into our midst with this gorgeous yet startling prophetic image: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news.”<sup>2</sup>

“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”

So, I ask again, what brought you to church this Christmas morning?

Only you can answer that.

My hope and prayer, however, is that you came to Saint Mark’s Cathedral this morning to meet the living Christ, the flesh and blood vessel of God’s love that moved into the neighborhood.

Perhaps your Christmas encounter with Christ is a celebratory moment for pause and refreshment, renewing and recharging as you continue to make your faithful baptismal journey into Christ.

Or perhaps this morning, God’s new thing being born in you is surprising, uncertain, tender. But at the same time, seeded with just the beginning of hope.

Either way, Christmas is alive in you, in us.

Remember, “Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome

here.” We say that every Sunday and are serious in our commitment to abide by that promise.

Whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever you seek, I hope today you experience Emmanuel.

God with us.

God with you.

Perhaps you came to the cathedral on this Christmas morning because you know that Saint Mark’s is a special place for encountering God with us, and not just at Christmas. We meet Christ in each other, in the Word proclaimed, read, preached, chanted, and sung, and, in a moment, we will meet Christ this Christmas morning in the profound and sacred mystery of the Eucharist.

In the sacrament of Holy Communion, we both touch and are touched by the real presence of Christ. We take Christ’s body into ours, a sign, a symbol, and an embodied encounter with God’s boundless love and grace.

This is what Christmas is all about, and it’s why we come to church, even and especially on Christmas morning.

And so, renewed by God’s love incarnate, it is now for us to take the free gift of Christ that we encounter here in so many ways and bring it out into the world. Give it away! Our broken, aching, wounded world needs

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 52:7 (NRSV)

Christmas, the Christ in Christmas, oh, so desperately. Just as we do.

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news.”

May we be those feet for Christ, and his hands, and his voice, and may we follow Emmanuel, God with us, into every neighborhood wherein he dwells.

Merry Christmas.



SAINT MARK'S  
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

*Saint Mark's Cathedral lives in a grounded faith and spirituality; we seek to liberate people for ministry. We are grounded in ancient Christian scripture and tradition while at the same time remaining open to the insight and truth of contemporary life. You'll find Saint Mark's Cathedral actively involved in service and outreach to our community. Together we pray, worship, study the scriptures, and explore the richness of twenty-one centuries of Christian experience. Wherever you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here!*